Commentary

Volume Fifty-five, Number Three, March 1973

Prisons, Politics & the Attica Report

Roger Starr

Early in the Summer of 1970

A NOVELLA

A. B. Yehoshua

Rewriting History
WALTER LAQUEUR

The Intellectuals and the People
JAMES HITCHCOCK

A Look at Margaret Mead
SHEILA K. JOHNSON

The Art of Diane Arbus
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Movie Chronicle
WILLIAM S. PECHTER

Vietnam and Collective Guilt
NORMAN PODHORETZ

Books in Review:
Elliott Abrams
Michael A. Meyer
Louis Berg
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Commentary

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Vietnam and Collective Guilt

Norman Podhoretz

IN DISCUSSING the bigoted attitudes toward the general American populace which have become so widespread within the intellectual community in the past few years, James Hitchcock (p. 64) confines himself to examples drawn from domestic life, no doubt because that is the arena in which these attitudes have mainly found expression. Not long ago, however, the idea began to gain ground that the American people, in addition to being racists, materialists, and philistines, also share in a "moral or criminal culpability . . . in relationship to the Vietnam war." The words I have just quoted were spoken by Dr. Robert Jay Lifton at a recent conference on "Questions of Guilt" to which his contribution consisted of what he himself describes as "a rather delicately stated version of collective guilt which . . . is relevant to us now in America."* So far as Vietnam is concerned, Dr. Lifton takes it for granted "that guilt that can be judged externally and guilt that can be experienced subjectively is there." Indeed, he says, "Living in America now in 1972 is sufficient cause to feel guilty" in itself. Unfortunately "that doesn't mean that the majority of Americans so feel." Either they lack the "moral sensitivity" to see that they share responsibility for the evil done in their name, or they lack the courage to acknowledge the guilt which, in spite of "blockage or numbing processes," they actually feel. They are, then, triply damned: as criminals, as brutes, and as cowards.

The doctrine of collective guilt is a terrible doctrine. It holds individuals responsible for actions which they themselves never committed; and in Dr. Lifton's "delicately stated version," it even holds individuals responsible for actions which they have protested against or otherwise opposed. Thus, although everyone at the conference he was addressing has been a strong antagonist of American policy in Vietnam, he implicates them all—and himself as well: "I think that, since all of us are part of America and we, one way or another, live in the American realm and contribute to national and military efforts, we share a certain culpability. . . . I would venture to say that most of us in this room can think of certain moments where a certain exquisite conjunction of shared and very special private guilt came together." Now, in my opinion, Robert Lifton can be accused of a great many sins: if, for example, he were to indict himself for shoddy thinking and unctuous moralizing, no one familiar with his writings would have any difficulty in concurring. But having consistently fought against American policy in Vietnam, he simply cannot be accused, by himself or anyone else, of complicity in what the American government has done there.

Be that as it may, and even supposing that American participation in the Vietnam war was criminal or immoral—rather than, as some of us have believed from the very beginning, tragically ill-conceived—in what sense were the American people responsible? The decision to enter the war was made by John F. Kennedy and his

* An edited transcript of the proceedings appears in the latest (Fall 1972) issue of *Partisan Review*.

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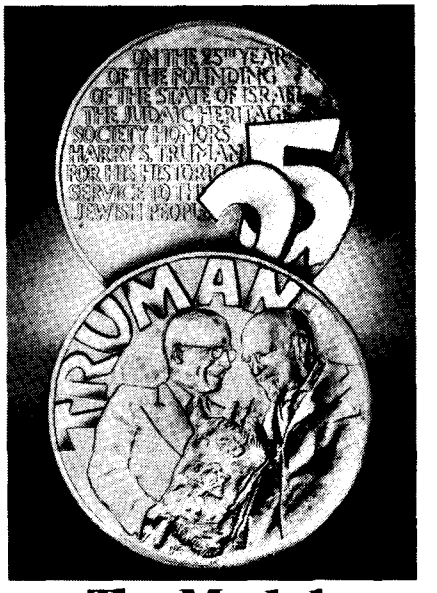

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The decision by Truman alone

Margaret Truman, in her biography of her father, writes, "This was a decision made by Dad alone, in spite of the opposition of the State Department . . ." Abba Eban, in his recent book, *My Country,* speaks glowingly of Harry Truman as the man who had taken "audacious responsibility" for recognizing Israel a few minutes after its establishment.

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In appreciation and commemoration, The Judaic Heritage Society has created a Tribute to Truman Medal. On the face of the medal, designer Oscar Harris has dramatically captured a precious moment in history — the presentation to President Truman by Chaim Weizmann of a Torah scroll, symbolizing the gratitude of the people of Israel, in 1948. The reverse of the medal bears the inscription, "On the 25th year of the founding of the State of Israel, The Judaic Heritage Society honors Harry S. Truman for his historic service to the Jewish People."

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advisers; the decision to escalate the war was made by Lyndon B. Johnson and his advisers; and the decision to withdraw from the war gradually rather than all at once was made by Richard M. Nixon and his advisers. None of these major decisions owed much, if anything at all, to popular pressure. The people went along, but they were never enthusiastic over the war, feeling for the most part incompetent to judge and willing on the whole to give their leaders the benefit of the doubt. For America the war in Vietnam was not a people's war, it was a war of the elites, conceived and executed by "the best and the brightest" who later—and with exactly the same dogmatic assurance—opposed and denounced what they alone had wrought. (Consider Daniel Ellsberg.) As for the people, most of them came to think that going into Vietnam had been a mistake in the first place, but that, once in, it would be a mistake to accept a humiliating defeat. In other words, they disagreed with the original judgment of "the best and the brightest" over the strategic necessity of American military intervention in Vietnam, and then they disagreed with the revised judgment of "the best and the brightest" as to the moral necessity of an unconditional American withdrawal.*

I THINK Mr. Hitchcock is right to caution us against romanticizing the general populace and to remind us of the dangers of an unbridled majoritarianism. The people are not necessarily wise, nor are they necessarily virtuous, and populism must always carry with it a sinister potential. But Mr. Hitchcock is surely also right in pointing out that in the decade just past, "it has often been the general populace which preserved its sanity in the face of the peculiar hysteria of the highly educated" rather than the other way around. Mr. Hitchcock is here talking about the doggedness with which the general populace has skeptically resisted many of the disastrous schemes of the intelligentsia for reordering domestic affairs. Yet now that American military involvement in Vietnam has finally come to an end, we can see that with respect to the war the general populace has been equally resistant to "the peculiar hysteria of the highly educated"—whether that hysteria manifested itself in the anti-Communism of the early 60's which got us into Vietnam, or the anti-Americanism of more recent years of which the doctrine of collective guilt revived by Robert Lifton is one of the more sickening symptoms. ■

* See "The Election and the National Mood" by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab in the January COMMENTARY for the evidence on popular sentiment concerning both the decision to intervene and the idea of an unconditional American withdrawal.

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Letters from Readers

About Philip Roth

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have only one reservation in regard to Irving Howe's superb essay on Philip Roth ["Philip Roth Reconsidered," December 1972]: he lets Roth off too lightly in an area important enough to warrant dissenting comment. Mr. Howe writes: "*Portnoy's Complaint* is not, as enraged critics have charged, an anti-Semitic book, though it contains plenty of contempt for Jewish life." At the risk of joining the ranks of the enraged, I should like to examine this statement.

To begin with, the line between "contempt for Jewish life" and anti-Semitism is a bit shaky. Among its various components, anti-Semitism has a generous admixture of contempt which may either spring from hate or lead to hate. But even if we accept the distinction made by Mr. Howe, Roth remains open to the heavier charge.

For the sake of argument I am prepared to grant that Roth's unrelieved picture of Jewish grossness, chicanery, lechery, hypocrisy, and so on belongs in the realm of the extended Jewish joke; and that Roth's vision of the Jewish family in *Portnoy* . . . is, according to the taste of the reader, satire, realism, or simply a hilarious lampoon of the Jewish tribe which should vex only the overly nervous Jewish bourgeoisie. After all, why should Jews be exempt from the social critic's jibe or the prophet's wrath? And who is more qualified than a fellow tribesman to reveal the sty hidden beneath ritually pure *kashrut*? Let me also grant that the tribe's perpetually endangered state is no reason for a serious humorist to stay his hand. Such matters should be the concern of rabbis, professional Jews, and other philistines, not of the honest writer and his enthusiastic reader. Yet even after all these concessions to artistic probity are made—"I paint the world as I see it"—there remains in *Portnoy* a distillate of something describable only as plain unadulterated anti-Semitism. The fact that the more sophisticated the critic the more readily he has ignored its presence tells us something about the Jewish condition in the United States.

No disquisition on the nature of anti-Semitism is called for in this instance. Let us venture to be simple. Of what, in addition to lesser charges (Jews are pushy, vulgar, dishonest, shirkers of military duty, and generally unsavory), do anti-Semites accuse Jews? The gravamen of the anti-Semitic indictment straight through Hitler is that the Jew is the defiler and destroyer of the Gentile world.

Now what about hapless Portnoy, the amusing *shlemiel* on the analyst's couch? He is neither so innocent nor so impotent. His boyhood pollutions are the prelude to his calculated pollution of his environment. In a classic description of what the Nazis called *rassenschande* (racial defilement), Portnoy explains that he lusts after blonde *shikses* not because he is drawn to them individually but because that is how he can "conquer America." In sexual intercourse his pleasure is that "I can stick it up their backgrounds." The scene in which he gloats at the contrast between his swarthy body and that of the fair Nordic patrician maiden he possesses is straight out of the Goebbels-Streicher script. Only the customary Roth technique of festooning the savage contour of his creation with amusing bits of idiom or local color—the dark Jewish body is at least half "undigested halvah and hot pastrami, from Newark, N.J."—keeps the chuckling reader from realizing what has been perpetrated.

Nor is Roth content with depicting Portnoy as the willful violator of the Gentile sexual background. He must be revealed as the enemy of the Gentile world. For Portnoy, Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity, the phony Jewish liberal *par excellence*, offers as his prime achievement his exposure of an "Ur-Wasp" in the television quiz scandals: "Yes, I was one happy yiddel down there in Washington, a little Stern Gang of my own, busily exploding Charlie's honor and integrity, while simultaneously becoming lover to that aristocratic Yankee beauty whose forebears arrived on these shores in the 17th century. Phenomenon known as Hating Your Goy and Eating One Too."

This is not even funny. It's plain vicious. And the voice is that of Roth not of Portnoy, for no "hap-

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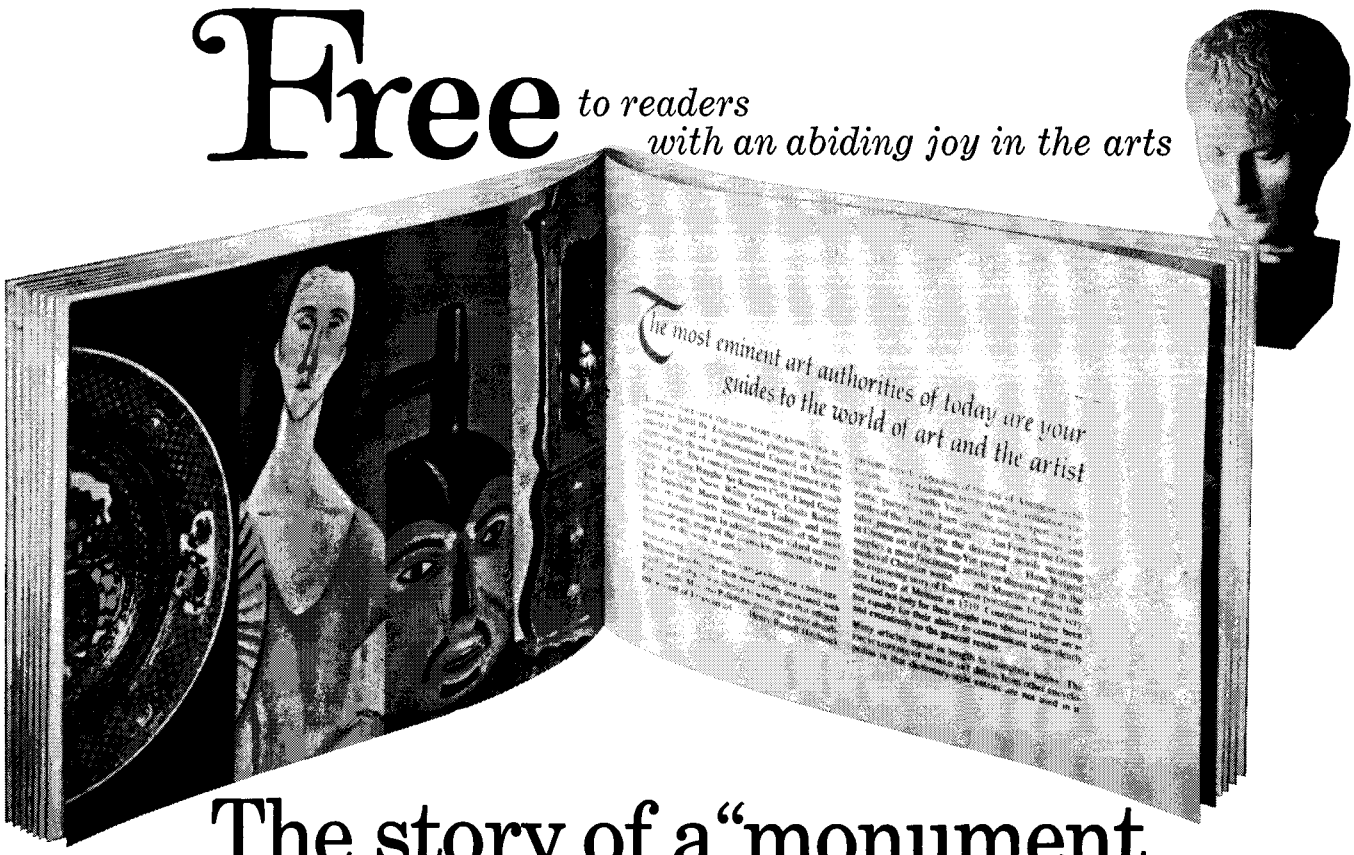

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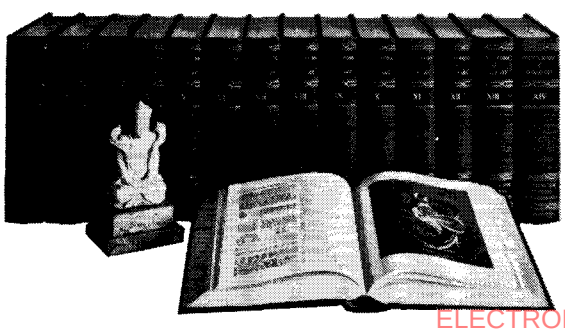

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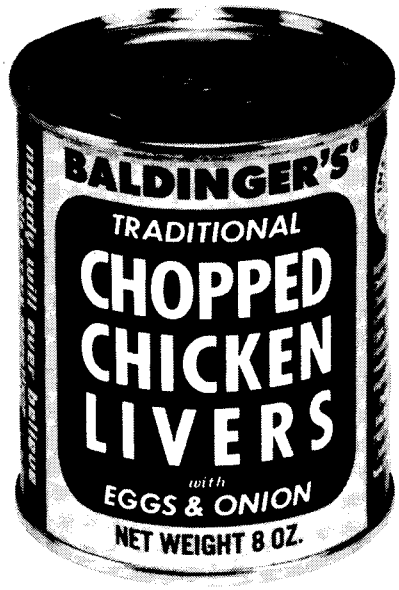

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py yiddel" would refer to himself as such in this context. The destruction of a *goy* is the sole positive achievement which Roth bestows on his creation. That the achievement is wholly out of character with fumbling Alex as heretofore presented only serves to underscore the act. Despite the disarming diminutive, the one happy yiddel emerges as the baleful Yid of tradition. The two crudest and most venerable stereotypes of anti-Semitic lore—the Jew as sexual defiler and malevolent destroyer with a supporting cast of cheats and vulgarians—move in a Jewish ambience whose authenticity is guaranteed by appetizing borsht, wonderfully mimicked intonations, and comic folkways. If the accent rings true, why doubt the words?

The literary decline of Roth is brilliantly traced by Mr. Howe. The same descending line may be noted in Roth's social commentary on American Jewry—his chief if not sole theme. By current standards the stories in *Goodbye, Columbus* now seem less shocking though just as skillful as when they first appeared. To *épater les bourgeois* today Roth has to kick over the traces entirely. The antic humor of *Portnoy* provides the guise. America, while holding its nose, embraced *Portnoy* as a perceptive if extravagant depiction of American-Jewish life and Jewish literati led in bestowing the accolades. Now that Roth has shifted from Jewish mother to mammary gland, cosmic profundities are being discovered in what is in reality a bore. But *The Breast* continues a process already apparent in *Portnoy*. Like every cartoonist, Roth dismembers his characters by dehumanizing them so that they never appear whole. Then he pastes the bits together with a realistic Jewish glue so that the reader, sniffing the agreeable aroma of knishes, can rejoice in discovering what "they are really like" without feeling guilty.

While the pathology of anti-Semitism may be mysterious in its origins, its symptoms are all too obvious. . . .

MARIE SYRKIN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the course of "Philip Roth Reconsidered," Irving Howe attacks Roth, his books, "the culture," literary critics themselves, rabbis, and Jewish communal leaders.

Mr. Howe makes random . . . assaults on Roth's own real or imagined character; the author is "impatient," "snappish," "dismissive," "raucous," and "self-aggrandizing." Either Roth and Mr. Howe are personal enemies or something about Roth's books bothers Mr. Howe. In the latter case, the crux of the matter is perhaps Roth's position outside "the tradition of Jewish self-criticism and satire." If Roth lies outside this tradition, what separates him from it is his comedy. In fact, there is really no American tradition of good comic, sophisticated writing as there is in England, France, and Russia. Not being able to categorize a writer may be disorienting and even upsetting, but these responses can be useful ones for a literary critic in taking the measure of a writer and his books. Mr. Howe seems instead to be insulted.

A clue to his highly subjective critical opinions is his misreadings of "Eli, the Fanatic" and *Portnoy's Complaint*. In both works, Mr. Howe's mistake is to overlook the complexities: the yeshivah is clearly not Roth's postulated solution to the crassness of Woodenton, and it is evident in the novel that Roth knows that members of other religions have sexual frustrations to contend with.

The mix in Roth of the robust, ambiguous, comic, and pathetic is perhaps difficult to grapple with and therefore disturbing. To deflect this disturbance onto personality issues and simplistic readings is to miss the point entirely and to derive solace from inappropriate lines of inquiry.

CAROL MORGENSTERN

Hewlett, New York

IRVING HOWE writes:

Carol Morgenstern doesn't read very well. She says that I attack Philip Roth's "own real or imagined character" as "impatient," "snappish," "dismissive." What I wrote was that "Roth's own temperament *as a writer* is inclined to be impatient, snappish, and dismissive." Roth's character, real or imagined, and Roth's temperament as a writer are two clearly distinguishable things. Hence it is gratuitous for Miss Morgenstern to wonder whether Roth and I are personal enemies. In case she is still worried about that, let me assure her that, as far as I'm concerned, we are not.

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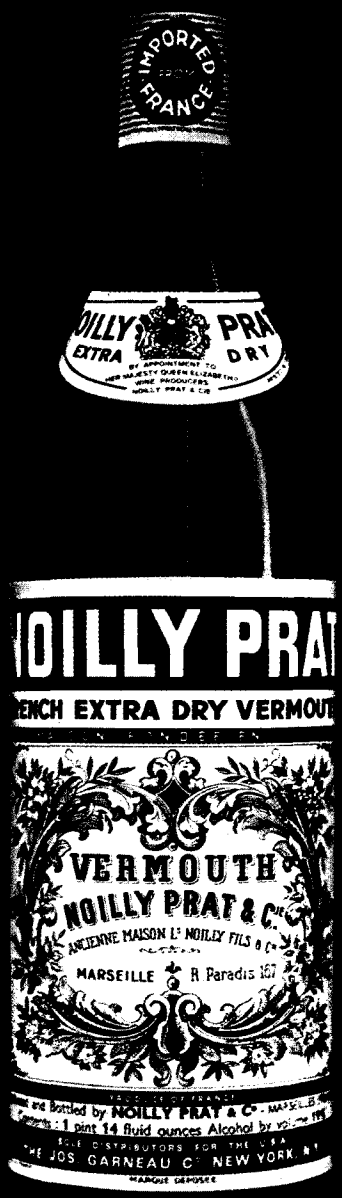
34 words on the Noilly Prat martini by W. Somerset Maugham.



"Noilly Prat is a necessary component of a dry martini. Without it you can make a side car, a gimlet, a white lady, or a gin and bitters, but you cannot make a dry martini."

"Points of View", 1958

Don't stir without Noilly Prat

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She writes that in Roth's story "Eli, the Fanatic," "the yeshivah is clearly not Roth's postulated solution to the crassness of Woodenton." It's pointless of her to imply that I had supposed it was. For, actually, I wrote that I found it difficult to take at face value "the solemn espousal of yeshivah Orthodoxy as the positive force in the story." To speak of "postulated solution" is to refer to proposals for the real world; to speak of "positive force in the story" is to refer to the way an element of plot works, or is meant to work, in a fiction. Indeed, one reason I was dubious about the yeshivah as a "positive force in the story" was my sense that this wasn't the result of Roth's conviction, but was being used, much too easily, "as a stick with which to beat Woodenton."

There's no space adequately to discuss Marie Syrkin's letter. Let me only say that there should be a way of distinguishing between an anti-Semite and someone who dislikes us, or between an anti-Semitic book and someone whose book "contains plenty of contempt for Jewish life."

Life under Communism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Only a serious moral veto of a contention raised by a reviewer seems to me sufficient reason to ask to be heard once again. This is why I feel it necessary to voice my disagreement with some of the opinions expressed by Adam B. Ulam in his generally warm and well-intentioned review of my book, *The Rosa Luxemburg Contraceptives Cooperative* [Books in Review, November 1972].

"In the area of social reform, trimmers and opportunists sometimes contribute as much as, if not more than, martyrs and idealists. . . ." asserts Mr. Ulam. This is an attractive . . . formula which, probably since the Renaissance, has persisted in Western writing and political philosophy. . . . The trouble is that it is quite difficult to substantiate with historical examples. . . . When pressed, the promoters of this idea resort to the classically correct but relentlessly exploited case of the charming Monsieur de Talleyrand (who helped France by dint of ruthless turncoatism), but they have great difficulty coming up with other examples. . . . However, even if the thesis might still hold water . . . to apply it to the new totalitarian civilization built up by Communism is poetically naive and only demonstrates wishful thinking on the part of many good people. This view also reflects the yearnings of some people after the neo-epistemology and neo-metaphysics of the Faith whose beautiful logical symmetry, after having been so often and so thoroughly raped by politics, has changed . . . into hallucinogenic and gibbering superstition. Both attitudes seem to overlook the merciless polarization of moral principles and existential sufferings which Communism has brought with it and which—when seen from within a Communist-ruled society—has a miraculous ability to transform both the superb Marxian precepts and noble social mythology into the unendurable reality of a garbage heap. Twenty years of close observation and experience on the sociocultural scene, masterfully manipulated by Communism and Communists, has convinced me that all one has to do is never rush to make judgments in the realm of personal ethics; time will uncover everything and pass its final verdict; but all possible interpretations of that verdict will prove more often than not that the persons and affairs in question, whose opportunism might have been deemed objectively salutary by Western observers, were more knavish, vulgar, and abominable than anyone could have guessed in advance—and that the subsequent effects of their actions were more disastrous than anyone could have anticipated. . . .

Thus, when Mr. Ulam writes, ". . . It would be foolish to deny that whatever their personal motivation and whatever their status as writers, Ehrenburg and Yevtushenko have exerted a positive influence on the tone of Soviet cultural life," I feel both embarrassed and helpless. Why, this is exactly how both gentlemen are mirrored in the American mass media, from the New York *Times* to Channel 13. . . . When reading these words, I lost my belief that in spite of everything there exists a difference between, let us say, *Time* magazine and educational television on the one hand, and a handful of those who really know some-

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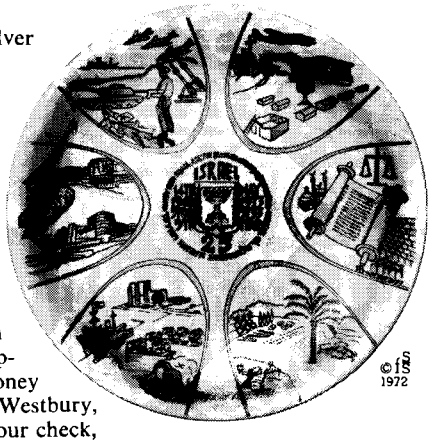

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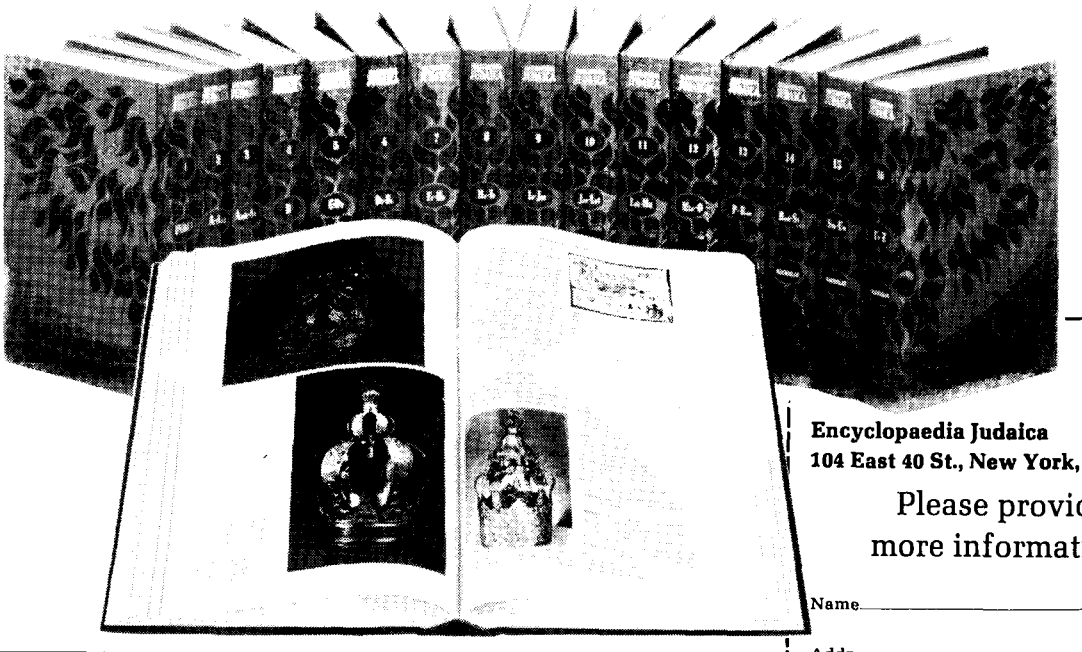

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The bereaved Countess wore nothing but white for the rest of her life, for she had loved her husband very much. So much so that, in his tradition, she continued caring for the vineyard. Which, in turn, continued to produce the superb wine.

She was really a very kind woman, and, like her husband, treated the people well. Slowly, they began to accept her. And they learned to love her as much as they had the Count.

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thing about how it actually is over there on the other. The assumption that Ehrenburg and Yevtushenko could have been connected with any reform evokes only a timid, melancholy sigh from anyone who has actually lived under Communism. And for a very simple reason: namely, that there does not exist one single proof for such a claim, neither in the facts themselves nor in the most lenient and ambiguous analysis and interpretation of the facts. . . . Throughout their lives Ehrenburg and Yevtushenko have made an art of . . . never demanding or initiating any change or reform, but always joining changes and reforms over the dead (or temporarily knocked-out) body of a concept of power, a trend, or a principle. . . . Their nonconformism was always put into operation five minutes after the danger was over: this enabled them always to display their "independence of mind" and their "opposition of conscience" in *Pravda*—and Mr. Ulam should know what it means to be printed in *Pravda* and the kind of "positive influence" such publication indicates. Anna Akhmatova was supposed to have said before her death that writers under Communism are either Communists or martyrs or Ehrenburgs—and neither the first nor the second ever benefited from the existence of the third. I would say that she was too humane and forgiving: both reason and empiricism teach us that when an absolute ruler has a wily and greedy Evil in his sway and is capable of giving it an appearance of Good, he will always do so. . . . And this is precisely the function of the Ehrenburgs and Yevtushenkos. It is also why I consider it a sickening spectacle when Nixon and Kissinger invite Yevtushenko for a friendly chat at the White House. I don't know what they expect to gain from this casual socializing, but I know that such an act constitutes a disgusting, stupid, and needless slap in the face to all the Solzhenitsyns, Sinyavskys, Sakharovs, Daniels, Medvedevs, Amalriks, Litvinovs, Yakirs, and countless decent people in Russia to whom Yevtushenko—his behavior, his quarter-talent and demi-intelligence, and his objective "influence"—is the symbol of the existential scum of Communist civilization. These men are entitled to ask: Is our fight and our torment worth anything when those who should know how to honor it extend their respects to and fondle the most ignominious and contemptible tools of our oppression?

Personally I am a bit ashamed to speak so much about Yevtushenko; in Eastern Europe, which demonstrates a dash of *la vie culturelle nuancée,* he is considered rather a crude operator, a hustler, a political and intellectual swindler. He may be constantly invited to New York and Acapulco by American universities and jet-setters à la Senator Javits, but he was never, to my knowledge, invited by the Polish, Czech, or Hungarian Writers' Union to visit Warsaw, Prague, or Budapest.

LEOPOLD TYRMAND

New Canaan, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The charge of "oversimplification" seems to be the standard favorite with many intellectuals who, like Adam B. Ulam, feel themselves duty bound to defend some of the sacred concepts that Western liberals have conjured up about life under Communism for their own peace of mind and comfort.

To know that you must plan, save, and scrape for months to obtain even the most basic commodities, such as a pair of shoes; to have strangers walk in and out of your apartment at will, looking it over, for anyone with a better official standing or connections can take it away from you; to read only the state-approved propaganda and no other books or newspapers; not to be able to travel, or move, or change jobs without official permission of the right agencies—how can these daily humiliations and hardships, and I speak from personal experience, be seriously equated with the "mental burden" of the average citizen of a democracy "of worrying about what proportion of the national budget . . . should go to defense," or nonchalantly dismissed as "inconveniences and irritations"?

True, there are different brands of Communism, as there are different types of cancer. But even under its least vicious form, one so totally dependent on the mercy of elements he can neither influence nor, often, even understand, can ill afford to become as "intox-

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icated with the infusion of freedom" as Mr. Ulam imagines. The Czechs have proven again how costly such illusions can be.

If Mr. Tyrmand fails to mention "that undeniable existential quality, which, when combined with genuine emotion, enables the Communist doctrine to stir men's hearts and minds," it is because the stirring takes place everywhere but under Communism, and what Mr. Tyrmand is describing in his witty and beautiful book are not the dreams and fantasies of romantics, but the unbelievable realities of a Communist civilization.

I sympathize with Mr. Ulam who so gallantly struggles to find the golden center from which to deliver his critique of the book, somewhere between Orwell and the new breed of experts on the happiness of life in the People's Republic of China and elsewhere under Communism. The trouble is that the reality of life under Communism does not easily lend itself to our notions of what the center is. Even our noblest attempts at objectivity meet with dismal failure in these regions of the world where our traditional concepts of reason have so little meaning. "Can one objectively explain a legal system in which the prosecutor is always right?" asks Mr. Tyrmand in his book. "Can one objectively investigate an economy where the shortage of bread is explained by the fact that every year more people eat bread; can one objectively examine the morality of people who build careers by hunting down and destroying the slightest manifestations of free thought, while in London, Paris, and Washington they deliver speeches about their struggle for freedom and the independence of the human spirit—and their Western listeners believe what they say?" No, not really. But to admit this would, for our liberal intellectuals, be more than they could bear.

ELLA JACIN

Norwalk, Connecticut

ADAM B. ULAM writes:

I don't know why, even in a very brief review, some people will read only selected passages or why the same people often take what is clearly a statement of fact for a moral judgment. I wrote that the message of Mr. Tyrmand's book appeared to me to be that "life under Communism is awful—and it doesn't matter whether the Communism in question is of the pre-Stalin, post-Stalin, or 'humanistic' variety." I made it clear that I did not disagree with this message, and I take it that Mrs. Jacin does not disagree either.

Of course Communist *doctrine* can "stir men's hearts and minds," otherwise we would not have so much trouble with Communism. But as I also made clear, *life* under Communism is something else again; it stirs up the kind of sentiments of which Mrs. Jacin's letter is a fair sample. Yes, if I had lived through 1937-38 and 1949-53 in Soviet Russia I would feel that 1956 brought "an intoxicating infusion of freedom." No, I don't struggle "gallantly" or otherwise to find some "golden center" from which to deliver a critique of this or any other book. I try to write what I think.

Trimmers and opportunists? I do think that an Ehrenburg is a more positive influence on the tone of Soviet cultural life than a Sholokhov, not to mention a Kochetov. Mrs. Mandelstam, who is in a much better position to know and to care than either Mr. Tyrmand or myself, is not unkind in her references to Ehrenburg.

I did not invite Yevtushenko to the White House, and I doubt that my opinion of the gentleman was instrumental in procuring him an invitation.

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Coles, Orwell & the Press

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the January issue [Letters from Readers] there is an exchange in which Andrew M. Greeley offers a rather mild criticism of "Dr. Coles among the Poor" by Joseph Epstein [August 1972]. My own feeling is that the article perfectly incarnates the snobbish self-righteousness that Coles's work so successfully challenges. Consider the essential structure of the argument which Mr. Epstein asks us to accept: Robert Coles has been much praised of late by the likes of *Newsweek* and *Time*. Praise from such quarters should give any thinking man . . . pause. These doubts are justified because Coles reveals himself to be an ambivalent "prototypical liberal," and this is why he has been praised by the editors of *Time* and *Newsweek* —they are prototypical liberals too.

Let me call attention to the silli-

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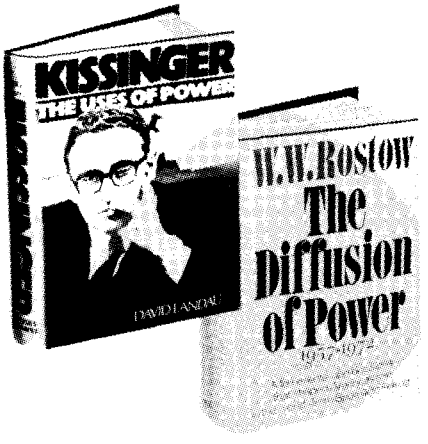

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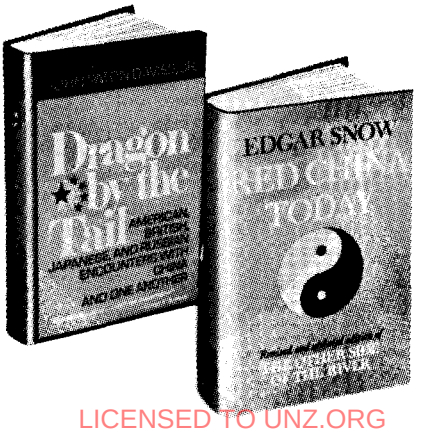

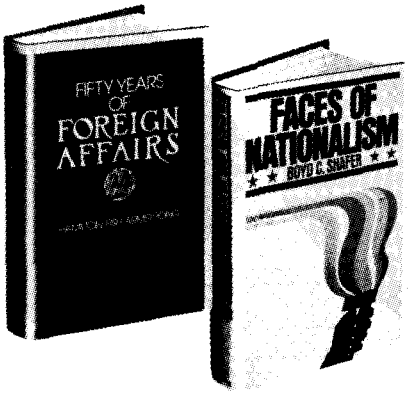

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ness of Mr. Epstein's assertions. Of all "intellectuals," Coles has been the least anxious to remain within a "closed circle" of peers. Mr. Epstein acknowledges as much when he alludes to Coles's recurrent appearance over the past decade in the pages of our most popular magazines. Thus Coles hardly needed to be discovered in order to make the "leap" into "national celebrity" which Mr. Epstein feels the profiles in the newsweeklies represent. A much simpler explanation is that last winter *Newsweek* (I cannot speak for *Time*) took note of the simultaneous publication of Volumes II and III of *Children of Crisis* by featuring a longer-than-usual article on Coles. Perhaps we should have waited six months until COMMENTARY got around to taking note of Coles?

At the heart of Mr. Epstein's criticism we find the following sentence: "What *Children of Crisis* lacks is precisely an organizing sensibility that might have provided a center to the work as the sensibility of George Orwell did. . . ." On the contrary, Coles's work—all of it—displays an extraordinarily precise sensibility, a permeating sensibility, to be more precise, which has as its intention the rendering of real people in real places under trying circumstances. One reads Orwell to find out what Orwell thinks. One reads Coles to find out what his "subjects" think, feel, believe, and endure. In short, the comparison is specious.

Equally gratuitous is Mr. Epstein's effort to put down Coles as a "prototypical liberal," whatever that is. If nothing else, Coles has exposed the fallacies of social planning, the self-righteousness of Northern liberals, and the single-mindedness of latter-day rationalists. . . . If anything, Coles is a prototypical conservative in his natural appreciation of the role that religion and regional and other traditional roots play in the lives of those he has studied. . . .

KENNETH L. WOODWARD
Newsweek
New York City

JOSEPH EPSTEIN writes:

Allow me to set aside Kenneth L. Woodward's rather lame insults—that "snobbish self-righteous," that "silliness," and the rest—and attempt to deal with the points that emerge, somewhat chaotically, from his letter. These appear to be two.

The first is his accusation that I seem to believe that any intellectual figure who, upon offering a radical critique of society, is praised by such magazines as *Time* and *Newsweek* ought automatically to be suspect. I didn't actually formulate it quite so succinctly in my essay on Coles, but I would certainly subscribe to it here.

Mr. Woodward's second point has to do with my comparison of Coles to Orwell. "One reads Orwell to find out what Orwell thinks," Mr. Woodward writes. "One reads Coles to find out what his 'subjects' think, feel, believe, and endure." What I believe Mr. Woodward is saying here is that one reads Orwell for opinions and Coles for the truth. That I cannot subscribe to.

Finally, Mr. Woodward notes that, "If nothing else, Coles has exposed the fallacies of social planning, the self-righteousness of Northern liberals, and the single-mindedness of latter-day rationalists. . . ." If that were so—and I am very far from being persuaded that it is—then you might say that the only people Robert Coles has actually left unscathed are the editors of certain newsweeklies.

On Merit

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul Seabury has written a most thoughtful and constructive piece on "The Idea of Merit" [December 1972]. His linking of merit with equal opportunity is highly instructive. Our social system, however, long has denied to blacks, Chicanos, and other minorities equal opportunities for participation in the meritocracy. In view of the earthy facts of life, it would seem realistic for Mr. Seabury to speak of merit *without* equal opportunity. The myth he speaks of appears to embrace social justice. The reality does not.

Pragmatically, the real world is likely to witness many more generations of discrimination against minorities in the absence of affirmative-action programs. Of course, a blanket endorsement or a blanket condemnation of affirmative-action programs is nonsense. It is necessary to design specific and concrete policies adapted to particular labor-market conditions as well as particular and concrete employer settings and attitudes. The employer, for example, who has been discriminating against women or other minorities may find that recruitment policies, at realistic salary and professional levels, may lead to the

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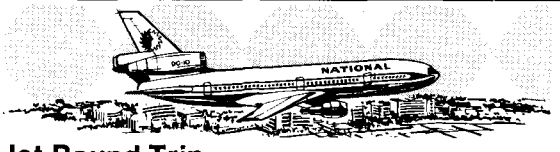

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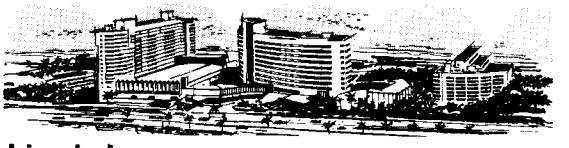

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selection of candidates far more qualified than their traditional staffs. The problem is one of adopting personnel-action programs that attain *both* merit and equal opportunity. There is no conflict in values when justice is really the concern of the policy-makers. In the long run, just and appropriate affirmative-action personnel programs require the necessary reallocation of resources needed to develop the numbers and excellence of qualification of all persons regardless of race, sex, religion, national origin, etc. Justice is costly. Injustice is disastrous. The economics of affirmative-action programs needs examination, and in this, Mr. Seabury is deficient.

JOSEPH LAZAR
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

How does one merit merit? How does one merit beauty, strength, energy, creativity, or life itself? Ultimately, as Job discovered, one does not merit merit, except by being. Merit is a gift, and not earned, unless it is a derivative merit, produced by the earning power of a more basic merit, in the same way that health, wealth, knowledge, and wisdom may be produced in part by the earning power of will, intelligence, energy, or life.

Two basic anomalies in the merit system are that the derived merits such as wealth and health are not always derived from more basic merits or virtues, but may often be the result of vice; and that the basic merits or virtues are always imperfect and often fail to produce desired results. . . . How does one cope with these two anomalies?

One way is with Egalitarianism, the major driving force of the New Left. Egalitarianism would mitigate the effects of time and chance in the economic sphere by making no, or few, distinctions . . . on the basis of merit or virtue. Everyone would be treated substantially equally because, in the end, nobody deserves anything. "Use every man after his desert and who should 'scape whipping?" Ironically, the Egalitarians seem to enjoy whipping everything and everyone, including themselves, if the whipping will advance their "cause." . . .

The other way is so difficult and complicated that it has no name and few slogans. Some of the names and slogans imperfectly associated with it are Individualism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Capitalism, Hu-

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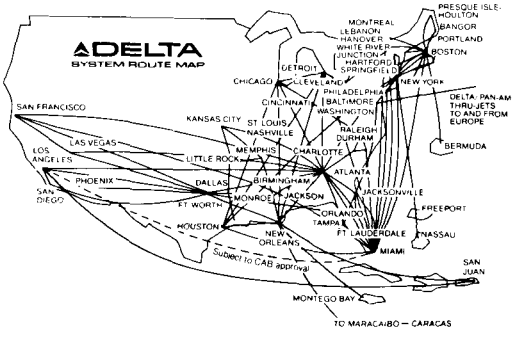

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manism, Freedom, Incentive, the Free Market, and Stoicism. Perhaps the other way could be called "Diversism" or "Diversity" because it recognizes the diversity of merits, talents, and virtues in the members of society and seeks to permit and foster their growth by permitting the possibility of economic reward for economic merit. Merit may well be its own reward, but in the economic sphere, where labor and drudgery are involved, the economic end is often the only thing which can justify the economic means; and merit will tend to expend itself only in proportion to its ability to earn.

As I see it, COMMENTARY is presently earning its way by meritorious service in attempting to explore and foster a harmonious philosophy of diversity, which may yet drown out the simple siren song of Egalitarianism, while avoiding the cacophony of selfishness. For this, much thanks.

PAUL J. BRINSON

Kenmore, New York

Leaving Russia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was deeply moved by "Getting Out of Russia" by Lev Navrozov [October 1972]. It was especially moving to read of the communion of spirit among those young boys in their early teens, and the depth of the trust which was maintained among them. How better does one build character?

I was also impressed by the steadfast courage of the writer and his friends. What amazing people they were and are. Mr. Navrozov was (is) surely a genius, and many others must be too.

It is saddening to note that even that tiny window to the outside world is being cut off. The process of exclusion from economic and political life is under way, and now there is no escape but to emigrate. And that too is going to be difficult.

I am sure that we will be hearing more from Mr. Navrozov. . . .

EWAN CLAGUE

Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lev Navrozov observes that one who forgoes the chance to leave Russia is either a slave or a clown. Similarly, when offered the opportunity to help a Jew leave Russia, let us not be enslaved by principle. It is clear that the imposition of exorbitant exit taxes on highly educated Soviet citizens seeking to emigrate constitutes a gross violation of the fundamental human right of every man to leave his country freely and pursue his work in any land where he is welcome. And since the policy chiefly affects Jews who wish to go to Israel, it also bears the ugly mark of discrimination. Even if one accepts the Soviet justification that state subsidization of institutions of higher learning permits the state to condition the right to emigrate on repayment of the subsidy, it is clear that the amounts of the head tax bear no relationship to this justification. Since the state is normally fully reimbursed for the costs of education by five to six years of labor, emigrants would have more than compensated the USSR for its initial educational investment. Under these circumstances we can understand the refusal, particularly by Jewish organizations, to raise money to pay these taxes. . . . Yet it may be that this refusal is short-sighted, that rigid adherence to "principle" will deprive us of the opportunity to liberate a large group of people. . . .

What is the principle that is worth upholding at the expense of the possible freedom—personal, intellectual, religious, and cultural—of thousands or millions of Russian Jews? We have, in the past, spent large sums of money to inform those behind the Iron Curtain, to encourage their striving for freedom, to tell them not to despair. We have at times appeared willing to risk military confrontation to forestall the expansion of Soviet tyranny. In South Vietnam we have paid a terrible price in lives, treasure, and political unity in the name of preserving the right of the South Vietnamese to escape Communism. Yet the sole requirement here to release Soviet Jews from a repressive government is the payment of money and the tacit acceptance of our inability to make powerful nations act decently toward their citizens. The afflicted parent, and often the community, usually will pay the

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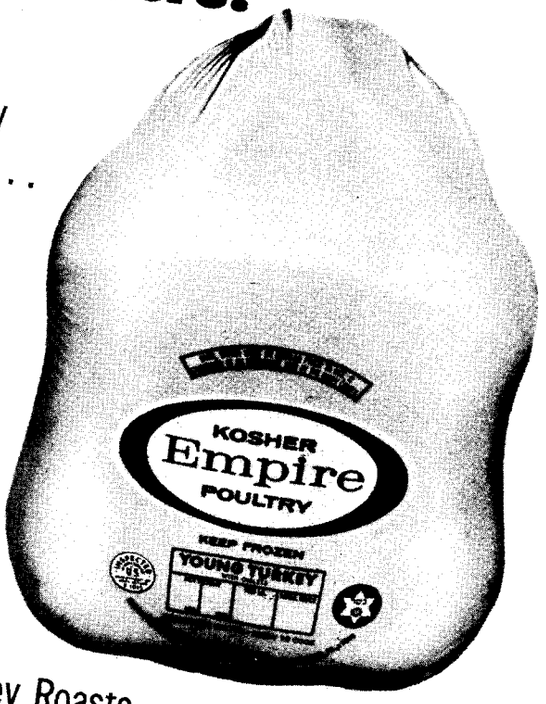

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ransom for a kidnapped child. Perhaps more relevant, we did not hesitate to alleviate human suffering by exchanging food and medical supplies through the Red Cross for Cuban captives. We do not necessarily argue that the ransom should be paid by the United States government. Private citizens could raise the money, although we should bear in mind that legislation has been proposed to grant Israel $85 million for the resettlement in Israel of Russian immigrants.

Under these circumstances, we must distinguish matters of principle from tactical considerations. Of course, the Russians may, in fact, be unwilling to effectuate a sizable exchange. If the underlying purpose of the exit tax is to deter emigration, even a generous offer may be refused. However, there is reason to believe that the Russians are interested in ridding themselves of troublesome minorities and in obtaining more Western currency. At present Soviet citizens wishing to emigrate still can receive financial aid from abroad. There is also the danger that the Soviet Union may escalate its terms. However, the only way to find out is to make an offer. Having committed itself this far, and given the advantages of exchanging a disaffected minority for hard cash, Russia may find it easier to go through with the deal than to renege.

We are not suggesting that pressure should not be applied to rescind the head tax. Congressional action conditioning trade agreements with Russia on recision of the fees makes sense. Those in power in the Soviet Union are not completely insensitive to adverse publicity; they do not wish to antagonize the West more than is necessary. And pressure has, on occasion, worked in the past. The permission given to Jews to move to Israel last spring, even though their relatives there were not "close relations," was itself a dramatic turn around.

But in choosing among alternative tactics and strategies, we must recognize the overriding importance of helping human beings to escape from a situation they have deemed incompatible with their human dignity.

ROBERT L. BARD
LEWIS KURLANTZICK
University of Connecticut
West Hartford, Connecticut

Redistributing Income

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

An unfortunate decimal-point error in Steven Kelman's letter [Letters from Readers, February] commenting on "About Equality" by Irving Kristol [November 1972] dramatically destroys his case, and, surprisingly, Mr. Kristol fails to recognize it. If the nation's 3,500,000 richest families (those with incomes above $30,000) paid an extra $1,000 each in taxes, that would yield not the $35 billion Mr. Kelman calculates, but only $3.5 billion. The policy implications of this are, of course, quite critical. The fact is that there just isn't enough money to be picked up in the highest-income rungs alone, both to raise the incomes of the lower rungs and to meet all of the public needs that Mr. Kelman and others properly advocate. The tough truth is that, whatever we do and should do to increase the contributions of the rich, we will have to look for more from the many millions in our middle-income groups if any real progress is to be made in achieving the social goals many of us share. And there's the rub. Those earning around $10,000 or $20,000 a year desire, understandably, to live like those earning $30,000 or more, and for them their present taxes seem already oppressive.

The social and political climate these days does not permit of any expectations that the great majority of Americans will soon agree to an increase in their tax load. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't work for a better climate and for greater public understanding of the basic facts of life.

HYMAN BOOKBINDER
American Jewish Committee
Washington, D.C.

In Praise

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Many thanks to Daniel P. Moynihan for his "Address to the Entering Class at Harvard College, 1972" [December 1972]. This senior citizen read it with relish and profit. Mr. Moynihan has redeemed the word "honorable," making it once again bright, relevant, and honest. It is a pity he is going to India. We need him here.

BETH ROSENBAUM
Brookline, Massachusetts

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Prisons, Politics & the Attica Report

Roger Starr

On September 11, 1972, one year to the day after the end of the Attica prison riot, the Special Citizens' Commission appointed to investigate the riot issued its official report. Although the report was beyond question a government document, it did not resemble one. The chairman, Dean Robert McKay of the New York University Law School, later explained that in order to achieve the widest possible circulation at the lowest cost to the state, the commission had given an advance copy to Bantam Books. Bantam then published the report in paperback form with a glossy cover bearing a lurid photograph, and marketed it at newsstands and cigar stores.* The book was illustrated with 64 photographs including news shots made during the three days when the prisoners held control of Attica's "D" Yard and carried on what may well have been the most disorderly, least private, life-and-death negotiations in the history of the world. In addition, the book contained official pictures of the bloody and tragic recapture of the prison by force of arms, and a group of what might be called art shots, giving the impression of normal prison life at Attica, if there could be such a thing in the months following the outbreak.

Several upstate legislators complained loudly about the manner in which the document was issued, terming it impolitic and sensational, but the publishers are somewhat disappointed by the actual sales of the book. Slightly over 100,000 copies have been printed, and no one expects any more. Nevertheless, *Attica* has been reviewed favorably in a number of newspapers and has been featured on the front page of the Sunday New York *Times Book Review*. Already it is being used as established authority by editorialists, columnists, and others who regard it as a suitable companion to other reports by government commissions, like the McCone, Kerner, and Scranton commissions, appointed in the past few years to investigate social disturbances in other milieus. Moreover, it is becoming one of the centerpieces in the newly awakened preoccupation with the issue of prison reform. For years Americans professionally concerned with correction have been trying to interest the public at large in their problems and their need for vastly increased public funds to bolster education and vocational training in existing prisons, and to construct new, smaller prisons in which inmates, more carefully classified, would be dealt with in ways more likely, it is hoped, to bring about their rehabilitation. Only recently, however, has penal reform emerged as an issue for widespread public discussion, mainly no doubt because of the surge in interest in crime in general. Officials and writers as varied in their motives and in their political views as Ramsey Clark, Chief Justice Warren Burger, Tom Wicker, and Truman Capote have all been saying that the correctional institutions in the United States are not correcting their inmates and that something has to be done.

To be sure, the Attica Special Citizens' Commission did not come into existence because the State of New York wanted a general examination of its correctional system. It was formed within a few weeks of the recapture of the prison. Public shock had reached a peak when, 39 people having been killed in the course of the recapture, the autopsies proved that the ten who were guards had been killed by their rescuers, not their captors. In view of the general suspicion which now regularly greets all announcements from the halls of government, the restoration of confidence required some kind of impartial report on this extraordinary turn of events. Consequently the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals and the Presiding Justice of the four geographic departments of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court agreed to appoint a special commission to investigate the Attica riot.

Having hastily established the commission, the Justices, along with other public officials, may have wondered what exactly they had wrought. It soon became clear that the commission's investigation, separate and independent from the criminal investigation simultaneously undertaken by an assistant attorney general acting as special prosecutor, could endanger the rights of those interviewees who might later be subject to prosecu-

Roger Starr, whose contributions to Commentary include "The Lesson of Forest Hills" (June 1972), "What's Left?" (August 1971), and "John V. Lindsay: A Political Portrait" (February 1970), is executive director of the Citizen's Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc.

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tion for acts committed in the course of the riot, the recapture, or the subsequent reprisals. Alternatively, any offering of immunity to witnesses by the commission might endanger the criminal prosecution itself. The commission spells out its initial juridical problems in the report; it ran into further trouble after the report was published, when the special prosecutor sought to subpoena its confidential records to assist him in his own investigations.

The constraints imposed by the ambiguity of the commission's charge shaped the character of the report. Although the commission staff interviewed many hundreds of inmates and officers who were at Attica during the riot, it did so on a confidential basis, which meant that the names of witnesses could scarcely be used in the text. One never knows how much of the data was provided by a single witness or by a few witnesses, nor has the reader any way of gauging the relationships among anonymous witnesses. The unattributed indirect quotation becomes the style of choice: only high officials, who have no privacy, and a few lesser mortals who were willing to give their names or who, by dying, passed beyond caring, are identified by name. The accounts of separable episodes in the course of the riot and its aftermath are precisely what the term implies: accounts written by members of the staff, some better than others, many repetitive. The indirect quotation and the absence of attribution prevent the reader from assessing the consistency of the testimony on his own.

These pressures of form made it inevitable that the report would be regarded by the commission as more important for its discussion of prison life and prison conditions than for its revelations about the riot. Those who remain interested in the questions raised by the events of the riot and its aftermath—who killed whom, how, and when, and whether there was a gentler way to retake the prison and release the hostages—will await the results of the criminal proceedings. Meanwhile there is the more general picture painted by the McKay report. What does it tell us about the Attica institution and about our prison system as a whole?

II

According to the McKay commission, the events at Attica can best be understood as an expression of bitter resentment on the part of the inmates against the facts of life in a maximum security prison in the State of New York at this time. Conditions in Attica—one of five maximum security prisons in New York—are not brutal; force is not used deliberately on prisoners, nor are the physical surroundings unsafe or unhealthy. The problem, according to the commission, is the utter incapacity of the prison system to meet the psychological and social needs of those committed to it by the courts. At Attica, in line with a system in which the commission notices scarcely any changes since the opening of New York State's Auburn prison in 1819, inmates are confined to their individual cells for about 14 to 16 hours of the day; they work at uninteresting jobs for about 5 hours a day; they are permitted to walk, under supervision, from their cells to the mess halls for meals; and they can participate in limited outdoor recreation in yards holding about 500 people each. After having experienced this deadening routine for an arbitrarily determined number of years, remote from their families, deprived of normal sexual life, their mail censored, their clothing drab and repressive of individuality, their work hardly compensated at all, they are released into society with the stigma of their prison record attached and expected to conform to its demands.

Nor does the basic physical routine of prison tell the whole story. The commission reports that on top of this physical system there have been encrusted two separate social systems, each of which imposes its special burden on the inmates. The first of these is the system of habit, involving traditional ways of treating prisoners, traditional views of the value of unquestioning obedience, of the importance of stifling nonconforming behavior and of withholding trust. This system of habit finds expression in a body of rules by which inmates must abide, even though the correctional officers treat the inmates with what a majority (according to the commission) considers deliberate capriciousness the better to assert their authority over them. Among the elements included in the system of habit are poor food, inadequate medical services, inadequate library and recreational facilities, arbitrary punishment in the "box,"* improper searches of cells, and pointless censorship of mail.

The second of the two systems engrafted onto the physical routine of Attica is the system of racism. Either because non-whites are prosecuted more vigorously than whites, or because discrimination forces non-whites to resort to criminal acts to survive, black and Hispanic inmates make up a far greater proportion of the population of Attica than those groups do of the population at large. Conversely, they make up a very small proportion of the custodial force of Attica. Thus the commission finds not only that the prison system is in itself a further and final refinement of racism, but also that racism is given an opportunity to flourish within it. For the racial and cultural differences that divide the inmate population from the custodial force have serious consequences. At

* The report consistently uses this term *without* quotation marks, as though the cells in question were windowless enclosures. In fact they differ from ordinary cells only in having their furnishings bolted to the wall and floor and in being segregated from the prison as a whole, though not from each other; nor are prisoners in the "box" denied visitors or mail.

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best, the correction officers fail to understand the reactions of their charges and tend, for example, to take at face value forms of speech and epithets which may have a far less serious meaning on the other side of the racial barrier. At worst, the social disparity inspires hatred on the part of officers to whom the helpless inmate has come to symbolize threats of change in the way of life to which the officers are devoted. A special manifestation of this worst of possibilities is that the racial difference may provide just that bit of rationalization which will release the suppressed sadism of the white correction officer with—as the inmates perceive the case to have been with George Jackson—murder officially disguised as law enforcement the result.

ALL these indignities might have been borne peacefully by the convicts of an earlier day, but the commission tells us that Attica is now catering to a "new breed" (the term is used frequently in the report) of black inmate who refuses to accept society's description of him as a lawbreaker who should be penitent for his misdeeds. Members of the "new breed" see themselves as the victims of an oppressive society, and they are determined to maintain their newly discovered pride and independence even in prison through political action and protest. In July 1971, a group of such "new-breed" inmates (apparently six in number), calling themselves the Attica Liberation Faction, sent a manifesto to Russell Oswald, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Correctional Services in Albany, demanding changes in a number of rules and regulations at Attica. Commissioner Oswald acknowledged receipt of the letter and wrote back that he was taking the suggestions under advisement, but when the months [*sic*] between July and September passed without constructive action, tensions rose in Attica. On September 11 it was this tension, the commission tells us, which finally exploded.

The immediately precipitating incident was an altercation on September 10 between two prisoners in the yard in which the 500 inmates of "A" Block were taking their recreation. One participant in the altercation was never identified, but a correction officer, seeking to intervene in the fight, was himself punched by the known participant. This incident was quickly followed by what we are told was the unpremeditated massing of nearby inmates around the two principals and the intervention of a third inmate. In the face of the massing, it was impossible to impose disciplinary punishment on the offending inmates. The next morning, however, it was decided that 5 Company —the company to which one of these inmates belonged—should be sent back to its cell block after breakfast instead of being allowed as usual into the yard. While the company was being escorted from the mess hall, its members attacked the escorting officer. Shortly afterward there was a general eruption of most of the inmates in "A" Block. At this point, the gate which cuts off "A" Block from the rest of Attica gave way under the human pressure of the rioters, and within a remarkably short time, the rebellious inmates were in control of almost the entire prison. Part of the prison, containing almost half the inmates, many of whom had chosen not to participate in the rioting, was soon recaptured. But the rioters and their hostages were left in control of "D" Yard from which, three days later, they were ejected after a bloody assault with firearms.

This assault—the report continues—provided a violent confirmation of the habitual attitudes of the correction officers and the police toward prison inmates, and of the racial attitudes which stiffened the usual stereotypes. The rebellious inmates were given no clear indication that official patience had been exhausted and that deadly force was about to be used to recapture the prison. The type of ammunition employed in the shotguns of the police—buckshot—was far too lethal for situations involving massed human beings. Correction officers, many of them too emotionally upset by their own experiences and the injuries and threats to their friends, armed themselves in contravention of the recapture plan. Medical services were not sufficient to take care of the injuries that could reasonably have been expected from the final assault. Unnecessary brutality, accompanied by verbal racism, was used in returning the prisoners to their cells. Conditions were shameful for days afterward. And all this resulted from the basic institutional failure of the prison system to rehabilitate its charges, when the technique for rehabilitation is readily available.

In short, the McKay report's account of the Attica riot is similar to the account of other civil disturbances of the past few years given by earlier official reports like those of the McCone, Kerner, and Scranton commissions. The Attica riot is seen as a spontaneous and nonpolitical eruption in response to justified grievances too long gone unredressed by insensitive authorities.

III

THE plausibility and consistency of this account are supported at a number of points by facts which are amply corroborated by general experience. It is a fact that blacks are represented among all New York State prison inmates in a much higher ratio than in the general population; and among the correction officers in a much smaller ratio. It is a fact that the tacit mutual understanding between correction officers and inmates is perhaps the essential element in the social system of a relatively peaceful prison and that such understanding is much more difficult to achieve in the face of racial tension. It is also true that prison work is uninspired; that the

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level of pay is very low (unless one includes the cost of lodging, board, and guards); that the problem of prison sexuality looms over the personal lives of the inmates; and that the number prepared by prison to lead more constructive lives outside after release is disappointingly small.

For all this, however, the McKay report, taken as a whole, is seriously flawed by a tendentious reading of the situation at Attica. Sometimes it omits facts which might cast doubt on its conclusions; sometimes it uses such devices as quotation marks to cast doubt by innuendo on attitudes it finds uncongenial, while legitimizing other suggestions of which it approves; sometimes it makes outright factual errors, usually in the direction of exaggerating the conditions it describes; sometimes, by permitting many pages of text to separate related facts, it splinters rebuttal points that would otherwise be much clearer to the reader.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate all this is to examine how the report handles the question of whether the riot was spontaneous or planned—a question the commission itself considers central to its entire investigation.

Beginning, then, with the announcement that there is no evidence to sustain the charge of "plan" or "organization" in the starting of the riot, the commission proceeds to declare that what evidence it has "points in the other direction." This "pointing" description is based on two major bits of inductive reasoning. The first is that if the riot had been planned, it would have started not in a barred corridor but in the mess hall or the yard, where many more inmates could have become involved from the outset. Now it is unquestionably true that a maximum-security prison is most vulnerable in those areas in which a large number of men are gathered. But the Attica mess halls are protected with a series of tear-gas jets under the control of an officer whose post is inaccessible to the prisoners. Everyone in Attica knew about the gas jets which are in full view along the walls. Thus the *last* place one would expect a planned riot to start at Attica would be the mess hall where any serious disturbance would be quelled immediately by a flood of gas into a relatively confined indoor area. *Yet the McKay report omits any mention whatsoever of the gas jets.*

As to the yard, the commission's own narrative makes it quite clear to the reader, if not to the commission itself, that it was precisely at the moment when the members of 5 Company realized that they were *not* to be permitted into the yard as usual after breakfast on the morning of September 11 that they assaulted their guards and took possession of their own cell block. In other words, the fact that the outbreak occurred in a cell block rather than in the mess hall or the yard can only be said to "point" to the commission's conclusion if one vital scrap of information is omitted and other vital details are ignored.

The second argument used by the commission in support of the spontaneity thesis is that the behavior of the prisoners after the riot started was inconsistent with advance planning. If, says the commission, the rioters had been acting on the basis of a plan, they would not have hesitated after capturing their cell block, but would have swept immediately on to capture the rest of the institution. Yet elsewhere in the report we discover that the rebellious inmates spent the time between their capture of the cell block and their invasion of other parts of the prison not in hesitation but in breaking the legs off chairs for weapons and gathering up the knives which they had cached in their cells. Further, says the report, if the riot had been planned, the rioters would not have eaten so much candy and other food when they captured and sacked the commissary; they would have stockpiled it against the unknown possibilities of future common hunger. Yet yielding to the temptation of spoils is a common problem even of well-disciplined armies; it hardly seems inconsistent, standing by itself, with "planning."

So much for the commission's inductive reasoning. For the rest, the commission declares that it found "no evidence that the uprising at Attica was planned, either by avowed revolutionaries or anyone else." But what evidence did the commission expect to find? A written order of battle? Letters or messages? If it expected to find such evidence when it started its investigation, weeks after the events, what steps did it take to unearth it? We are never told, and only a very careful reader of the report will discover, in a passage separated by a full hundred pages from the section on evidence, that the commission never explored the only promising source—namely the testimony of those who might have done the planning, if planning there was. That is, neither the commission's paid staff nor its voluntary aides ever interviewed the sixty inmates whom the authorities regarded as the probable riot leaders. These men simply refused to cooperate with the commission.

WHAT, in any event, does the commission mean by "planning"? If it means nothing less than a detailed set of orders, in which a command staff assigned specific inmates to specific tasks and a specific timetable was adopted, with proof to be found in the fidelity with which the forces executed their assignments, the commission has provided itself with a definition which would scarcely even be satisfied by the battlefield acts of two well trained companies of soldiers. If, however, planning means that a relatively small number of men imagined and urged on their fellow inmates the possibility of a riot in which hostages would be captured, demands made, neutral observers summoned, the media attracted, and political points scored, then there is

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even less warrant for the commission's assertion that all the evidence points in the direction of a spontaneous outburst. Indeed, the contrary is closer to the case.

The commission itself tells us that Attica in the summer of 1971 contained a number of former inmates of Auburn prison who had led a demonstration there in the course of which all correctional officers in the yard were taken captive, relieved of their keys and other property, threatened, and ultimately protected only by a group of Black Muslims. Once in Attica, having been released from segregation by federal court order, the Auburn transferees, in the words of the McKay report, "immediately began to impress upon Attica inmates the unfairness and duplicity of the system which was supposed to be correcting and rehabilitating them." In addition to the Attica transferees, there was the already mentioned Attica Liberation Faction. The cells of those inmates, when searched, yielded what the correctional officers of Attica thought to be proof that they had been communicating with inmates at Clinton prison for the purpose of planning joint protest movements. The McKay report further states that because the construction of Attica made this prison seem physically more secure than others, the director of the Ossining (Sing Sing) classification unit had transferred what the commission, this time in quotation marks, describes as "his most difficult" cases there. Finally, there was at least one prisoner who had been transferred from the Tombs (as the county jail for the Borough of Manhattan is popularly labeled) after being indicted on numerous counts for the crime of inciting a riot there.

The presence of an extraordinary number of inmates who had demonstrated their readiness not only to protest against prison conditions, but to defy them, and to take hostages in the course of their defiance, would seem to "point in the direction" of the possibility that they were planning a similar protest at Attica. Obviously, this does not prove that these inmates did in fact foment the riot in which they and hundreds of others took part. Such proof could only be established, if at all, in a court of law. But there is certainly no justification for the commission's insistence that the evidence all points in the other direction.

Nor does the idea that the riot was caused by objective conditions bear critical scrutiny. A careful study of the deficiencies at Attica, as set forth in the McKay report, fails to establish that there was anything in Attica that was worse or harder to bear than at any other penal institution, and a great deal that was better and easier to bear. Approximately 70 per cent of the Attica inmates had, in fact, previously served sentences in this or other institutions and thus had ample experience on which to base a comparison. The traditional causes of prison revolts, traditional in both fictional and factual literature, were notably absent from Attica: the prison was not old and dingy, but rather modern, well designed, and though full, not overcrowded; it was not a horror house, like the Tombs in New York, or the New Jersey prison at Trenton; there was no discernible physical brutality by the guards; the food was not maggoty or spoiled; the prisoners were not held to long, arduous, degrading labor (as a matter of fact, no one who did not want to work had to work at all); the prison was not run by a powerful and corrupt clique of inmates, or if it was, the commission did not discern this; its administration was not itself corrupt; there was no apparent statistical difference between the sentences being served by blacks, whites, and Latins; nor did the sentences seem unusually long by American standards. More than 50 per cent of the prisoners, including those serving life sentences for murder, were serving terms with maximum lengths of seven years or less. As a matter of law, each inmate must be released under parole supervision when he has served two-thirds of the maximum sentence, unless he has been guilty of egregious prison misbehavior. In addition, the discretionary parole system releases many more at earlier points. All in all, though the commission states that there has been no significant change in the New York penal system since the 19th century, the truth is that 60 per cent of convicted offenders are currently serving their sentences at home, under parole supervision. In the 19th century, every convict served his time in prison.

The main body of the complaints collected by the commission against Attica were complaints against what might be called the institutionalization of prison life, not its brutality. These were complaints against the visiting system, the low cash wages paid in the prison industries, the amount of pork in the prison diet (Black Muslims are forbidden to eat pork), the censorship of mail, the medical services, the insufficient recreation time and equipment. Yet even on matters involving the institutionalization of prison life, a number of changes had been made in the months before the riot. Visitation privileges were greatly broadened; due process was afforded to men returned to prison for alleged parole violation; mail and book censorship were lifted almost entirely; limits were placed on the segregation of those accused of breaking prison rules and due process of a sort was provided to replace the discretion of the Deputy Superintendant in the imposition of punishment.

Thus, just as the commission fails to show convincingly that the riot was unplanned, it also fails to persuade us that the riot was caused by objective conditions or that the authorities were so insensitive to the grievances of the inmates that only violence could make them attend. In spite of the refusal of the rioters ultimately to accept specific promises of reform, and despite their de-

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termination to hold out for complete amnesty for criminal acts, a determination perhaps reflecting the fact that three inmates had been stabbed to death before the recapture of the prison, the commission continues to believe that the riot was aimed at prison reform. In the eyes of the commission, the Attica riot was visited on white America, and will be visited again and again as a punishment for racism and for a prison system that aims only at confinement and security, and not at rehabilitation.

IV

In calling for rehabilitation, the McKay commission echoes what every student of penology, serious and frivolous, has been saying for many years. But is systematic rehabilitation possible? According to the commission, the proof that it is can be found at Attica itself—in a special cell block, "E," where the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is located. The "cells" in cell block "E" are in effect rooms; their doors are solid rather than barred, they are larger than the cells in the other blocks, and they have windows facing the yards. DVR inmates also have access to a large dayroom with ping-pong tables and other recreational facilities, and to a kitchen.

Run by the State Department of Education and the Department of Correctional Services, and financed by a federal grant, DVR was originally intended for prisoners with physical disabilities. Later the entrance requirements were stiffened to include only those who had demonstrated a strong will to undertake the program, and to exclude all aggressive homosexuals and all those with "excessive hostility to the institution or society."

The DVR program consists of a school specializing in remedial education, a workshop for vocational training, and counseling and other forms of psychotherapy such as voluntary group-encounter sessions. There is a "token" system in which special privileges can be earned by acts of good behavior, and there is also post-release counseling and assistance.

Does DVR prove that rehabilitation works? The commission's report gives no statistics as to the post-release recidivism of men who have passed through the DVR system at Attica. Yet even if one were to assume that all DVR graduates are successfully rehabilitated, it would prove only that prisoners who have a powerful desire to lead lawful lives—the only kind who are allowed into the DVR program—can be helped to do so. But what of the "new breed" of black prisoner of whom the commissioner makes so much—the prisoner who rejects American society because of its racism, and who considers himself a political victim and no criminal at all? This "new breed" of prisoner is excluded from DVR on the ground of his "excessive hostility to the institution or society"; yet how could DVR do anything with him if he were admitted?

Rehabilitation of offenders remains a mysterious process even when the offender wills himself to be changed. When he wills precisely the opposite, changing him is no longer a question of rehabilitation, but of persuading him to alter his basic ideas about himself, about society, about politics. Other blacks would seem essential in this task where the "new breed" is concerned. There are signs—notably in the willingness of an increasing number of blacks to speak out against black criminal offenders—that some black leaders may be willing to assume such a responsibility, in spite of the risks of personal censure and communal friction. But if representatives of the state like the members of the McKay commission—who are in theory neither black nor white—are unwilling at much less risk to say plainly that the political ideas of the "new breed" are a fraud and a crude rationalization of acts committed for reasons that have no shred of political motivation, why should blacks be expected to carry the burden alone?

On this issue the McKay report is anything but plain. Indeed, it is shot through with moral uncertainty as to whether justice is on the side of the inmates or their guardians. In a crucial passage, the commission says that it "condemns the taking of hostages as a means for bringing about changes in society, even where peaceful efforts at reform have failed. Whether carried out in a commercial airline, or in a prison, the holding of human lives for ransom is wrong and only leads to more violence and to a backlash that makes change more difficult." After wading through the tepid language, and considering the not-quite established assumption about the failure of "peaceful efforts at reform" at Attica, the reader must expostulate that if kidnapping and holding victims for ransom are wrong, then they are wrong even if they make change easier, even if they make improvement likely. A commission which believes that kidnapping (and stripping and beating officers, one so seriously that he subsequently died) is primarily an unwise tactic in the pursuit of the worthy goal of prison reform—such a commission lacks sufficient belief in the importance of law to persuade offenders to accept it. It has itself, rather, been "rehabilitated" by the rioters to accept as preferable to its own the system of values which they allege to be theirs and which they insist is superior. For what the commission suggests is that force used by the inmates is understandable though ill-advised, while force used by the authorities is simply wrong. Thus on the cover of the report, the commission places a photograph showing the helpless prisoners, black and white, lined up naked on their way back to the cells after the riot while a state trooper, in yellow slicker, stands over them, baton in hand, like a slaver loading his prizes onto a ship. The commission does not explain that the inmates were

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naked not only because they had been searched for weapons (over 1,000 were recovered, according to the authorities) but also because their clothes had been impregnated with irritant gases, and were muddy and torn; the photograph is left to speak for itself as a symbol of the entire episode. Whatever else it may say, it does not speak of an even-handed appraisal by the commission of the intricate balance of rights involved in a system of criminal justice. This must include not only the right of prisoners to retain those human rights not specifically taken from them by the courts, but also their right to be protected from each other. The public at large has the right to freedom from the dangers to its peace presented by convicted offenders. Finally, not least, prison officials have the right to go about their lawful work in safety.

A program of rehabilitation must be fitted into the criminal justice system without flagrantly upsetting this balance. Even without the special problems posed by the "new breed" and by the response to it of people like the members of the McKay commission, rehabilitation is a highly uncertain process. The best current evidence fails to establish any procedure that works. No matter how humane the institution, nor even whether the offender is institutionalized at all; no matter whether the convicted lawbreaker is put on probation, under special supervision, or set to work with special guidance counselors, the results hardly seem to vary at all: much the same—and rather large—percentage of convicted offenders will proceed to commit new offenses.

THAT the rehabilitation of convicted offenders remains a mystery does not provide the state with an excuse for not attempting it continuously, on a larger scale than ever before, and more generously. But it seems foolish to suppose that the public should sacrifice all other considerations—such as the security of the prison itself—to rehabilitation, especially in the absence of proof that a particular program works. The success of rehabilitation must depend, not only on the way in which the prison is administered, and on the equities in the larger world outside, but also on the availability of rationalizations which encourage the offender to ignore the inhibitions which might otherwise hinder his commission of new offenses. In its general support of these rationalizations, the McKay commission has good company, the New York *Times* included.

The *Times* made its position clear last summer in commenting on another case involving another prison riot, this one in the Tombs. In the course of the trial of three defendants accused of having started the riot and of kidnapping prison guards, Judge Harold Birns said that although "conditions in penal institutions require reform and that many grievances of prisoners are well founded . . . the power to change appalling conditions found in prisons rests with the legislators." Accordingly, the judge ruled that the doctrine of "justification," offered by the defendants for the crime of kidnapping their guards, could not be sustained. And in his final charge, Judge Birns told the jury that even prison officers were protected by law and enjoyed the right to go peacefully about their business. The *Times* pounced on these words, and commented editorially that in seeking to sever the defendants' alleged acts from the conditions in the Tombs, the judge was echoing Alice in Wonderland.

To the extent that the notion of justification prevails, together with its twin, the notion that crimes committed by black men in the United States are political, no matter who their victims (and, of course, they are more often black than white) or whether they involve acts recognized as criminal everywhere in the world, rehabilitation becomes even more difficult than before. It is hard to see how the tenor of the McKay commission's report will do other than make more plausible the rationalizations that impede rehabilitation; more difficult the administration of criminal justice; more resistant to prison reform the great majority of Americans who are fearful of jeopardizing their own safety for the uncertain benefit of inmates; and more shaky the plight of the victims in the cities of the nation.

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Early in the Summer of 1970

A. B. Yehoshua

I BELIEVE I must once again explore the moment when I first learned of his death.

A summer morning, the wide sky, June, the final days of school. I rise late, vaguely dazed, straight into the depths of light; I don't listen to the news, don't look at the paper. It is as though I had lost my sense of time.

I get to school late, vainly search the dim green air for a fading echo of the bell. I start walking through the empty playground, across the squares of light and shadow cast by the windows, past the drone of classes at work. And then, surprised, I discover that the principal is running after me, calling my name from a distance.

But by then I have nearly arrived at my class of seniors, whose muffled clamor rises from the depths of the empty corridor. They have shut the door to disguise the fact that I am not there, but their excitement betrays them.

Again the principal calls my name from the other end of the corridor, but I ignore him, open the classroom door on yells and laughter which fade into a low murmur of disappointment. By this time they had been sure I wouldn't show up today. I stand in the doorway waiting for them to sort themselves out, wild-haired, red-faced, in their blue school uniforms, scrambling back to their desks, kicking the small chairs, dropping Bibles; gradually the desk tops are covered with blank sheets of paper, ready for the exam.

One of them is at the blackboard erasing obscenities and a distorted likeness of me. They look me straight in the eye, impudent, smiling inwardly, but silent. For the present my gray hairs subdue them.

And then, as I walk softly into the room, the exam questions in my hand, the principal arrives, breathless, pale. All eyes are fixed on him but he does not even look at the class, he looks only at me, tries to touch me, hold me. He, who has not spoken to me for the past three years, is all gentleness now; he whispers, almost begging: "Just a moment . . . never mind . . . leave them . . . you've got to come with me. There's some sort of message for you . . . come. . . ."

II

FOR three years now no words have passed between us, we've looked at each other as though each of us were made of stone. For three years I haven't set foot in the faculty room either, haven't sat on a chair or had my morning tea there. I slip into the school grounds early in the morning, and during recess I wander up and down the corridors or around the playground—summers in a large, broad-brimmed hat, winters in a greatcoat with the collar turned up—floating back and forth with the students. I make my trips to the office long after school is dismissed, leave my lists of grades, get a new supply of chalk.

I scarcely exchange a word with the other teachers.

Three years ago I was due to retire, had resigned myself to the inevitable, and was even toying with the idea of writing a small handbook of Bible instruction; but the war broke out suddenly and the air about me was filled with the rumble of cannon and distant cries. I went to the principal to say that I was not going to retire, that I would be staying on until the war ended. After all, now that the younger teachers were being called up one by one he would need me more than ever. But he saw no connection whatever between the war and me. "The war is all but over," he told me with a curious smile, "and you deserve a rest."

No rest came, however, but a fierce summer, and flaming headlines. Two of our graduates, very young, were killed, one a day after the other. And again I went to him, deeply agitated, hands trembling, and informed him in halting phrases that I did not see how I could leave them now—that

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A. B. YEHOSHUA, one of Israel's leading younger writers, is dean of students at Haifa University. He is the author of two collections of short fiction, *The Death of the Old Man* (1962) and *Opposite the Forrest* (1968; published in English translation by Doubleday under the title *Three Days and a Child* and reviewed in COMMENTARY by Harold Fisch, August 1972). Mr. Yehoshua's work has also been discussed in these pages by Robert Alter ("New Israeli Fiction," June 1969). The present novella, translated from the Hebrew by Miriam Arad, will appear in a slightly expanded version in Mr. Yehoshua's new book, *Early in the Summer of 1970,* to be published later this year by Doubleday.

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is to say, now that we were sending them to their death.

But he saw no connection whatever between their death and me.

The summer vacation started and I could find no rest, day after day in the empty school, hovering about the principal's outer office, waiting for news, talking with parents, questioning them about their sons, watching students in army uniform come to ask about their final grades or to return books to the library, sniffing the fire-singed odor in the far distance. And again, another death, unexpected, a former student quite a bit older, much loved in his time, from one of our first graduating classes, killed by a mine on a dirt-track. I went back to the principal again, shocked, beaten, telling him, "You see," but he tried to brush me off; he had ordered my pension forms prepared, had already planned a farewell party—which of course I declined.

A week before the start of the new school year I offered to work for nothing if only he would give me back my classes, but he had already signed on a new teacher and I was no longer on the staff.

School opened. I arrived in the morning, carrying a briefcase, books, chalk, ready to teach. He spotted me near the faculty room and made anxious inquiries: What had happened? What was I doing here? But, on the spur of the moment, I did not reply, did not even look at him, as though he were a stone. He thought I had gone out of my mind, but in the turmoil of the new school year had no time to deal with me. And meanwhile my eyes had discovered the new teacher, a thin, sallow young man. He entered the classroom, I lingered a moment and entered on his heels. "Excuse me," I said with a little smile, "you must be mistaken, this isn't your class," and before he had time to recover I had mounted the platform, taking out my tattered Bible. He stammered an apology and left the room, and as for the dazed students who hadn't ever expected to see me again, I gave them no chance to say a word.

When after a few moments the principal appeared, I was deep in the lesson, the class listening, absorbed. I would not budge.

I stayed in the room during recess, planted in a crowd of students. The principal stood waiting outside, but did not dare approach. I would have screamed, right in front of the students I would have screamed, and well he knew it; there was nothing he feared as much as a scandal.

By sheer force I returned to teaching. I had no dealings with anyone but the students. For the first few weeks I scarcely left the school grounds, I haunted them even at night. And the principal followed in my wake, obsessed, dogging my steps, talking, appealing to me, holding, stroking, threatening, reproaching, invoking common values, good fellowship, our many years as colleagues, suggesting that I write a book, prepared even to subsidize it, sending delegates to intercede with me. But I would not reply—eyes on the ground, or on the sky, or on the ceiling; frozen like a statue on the street corner, in the corridor, in the empty classroom, by the gate to my front yard, or even in my own easy chair at home, where he would come to talk to me in the evening. Till at last he gave up in despair.

He had meant to drag me into his office, but I did not wish to move out of the range of my students. I stepped a few paces into the corridor and halted, and before the attentive gaze of the students I wrung it out of him.

Some five or six hours ago—
In the Jordan Valley—
Killed on the spot—
Could not have suffered—
Haven't broken it to his wife yet, or to the university—
I am the first—

He had put my name on the army forms and for some reason given the school as my address.

Must be strong now. . . .

And then the darkness. Of all things, darkness. Like a candle, the sun going out in my eyes. The students sensed this eclipse but could not move, were unprepared for my needing help, while the principal talked on and on as though he had rehearsed this piece of news for the past three years. Until suddenly he uttered a little cry.

But I had not fainted, only slumped to the floor and had at once risen to my feet again, unaided; and the light, though still dim, returned to me again, in the empty classroom, seated on a student's chair, people thronging the room, teachers rushing in from nearby classrooms, curious students, office workers, the janitor, people who had not spoken to me these three years. Here they were all coming back, some with tears in their eyes, surrounding me, a whole clan, breaking my loneliness.

III

He had returned from the United States three months earlier, after an absence of many years. Arrived with his family late at night, on a roundabout flight by way of the Far East. For six hours I waited at the airport, thinking at the end that they wouldn't arrive at all, that I would have to go back as I had come. But at midnight—by that time I was dozing on a bench in the corner—they came, emerging from the obscurity of the runway, not as if from an airplane, but looking rather as though just back from a hike; rumpled and unkempt, heavy rucksacks on their backs, in one of them a white-faced toddler who looked at me with gentle eyes.

I hardly recognized my son in him. Bearded, heavy, soft—my son's hair was already sprinkled with gray, and in his movements there was some new slowness, a tranquility. He, whom I had already given up as a confirmed bachelor, coming

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back a husband, a father, almost a professor. I was dazzled by him. Then he brought his wife forward, in pants, a slim girl, enveloped in hair, in a worn, tasseled garment, one of his students presumably; and then she leaned toward me and smiled, her face clear. Very beautiful. At that moment anyway I found her so beautiful, touching me with cool transparent fingers.

My heart overflowing, I rose at once to touch them, kiss them, kiss the child at least, but he was too high for me, hovering up there in the rucksack, and as soon as I touched him he started talking in English, and the slim girl student joined in as well, a shower of words, in two voices, pouring their incomprehensible English over me. I turned to my son for illumination, and he listened with a smile as though he, too, could not take it in at first, then told me that they were amazed by the resemblance between us.

And afterward the customs check, a long, remorseless affair, as though they were suspected of something, myself looking on from afar, watching all their parcels being taken apart. And when at last we started on the journey home, in a dark taxicab, through a gradually lightening spring night, the baby was already drooping with sleep, like a plucked flower, huddled in his rucksack between the two of them on the front seat; while I, behind them, amid the luggage—a guitar, a typewriter, rolled-up posters—watched the loosely-tied parcels softly fall apart.

My son fell asleep at once, enfolding his sleeping son, but my daughter-in-law was surprisingly wakeful. She did not look at the road or at this land she had never seen before, or at the stars or the new sky. Instead, her whole body turned toward me, sitting in the back; her hair tumbling over my face, she fired questions at me, asking about the war: what do people here say, and what do they really want, as though accusing me of something, as though in some furtive way I enjoyed this war, as though there existed some other possibility. . . .

That, or at least something like it, for I had great difficulty understanding her, I who never learned English, but picked up what I knew from the air—literally from the air, from English lessons wafting in from adjacent classrooms while the hush of an examination lay on my own, or while pacing empty corridors waiting my turn to enter the classroom.

And I strained to understand her, exhausted as I was from the long night's vigil. My son sleeping on the front seat, a heavy mass, his head nodding, and I alone with her, observing the delicate features, the thin eyeglasses she had suddenly donned, such an intellectual, maybe this New Left thing, and for all that a trace of perfume, a faint scent of wilted flowers coming off her.

In the end I opened my mouth to answer. In an impossible English, an astounding mixture which I myself concocted, laced with Hebrew, obeying no rules, and she momentarily taken aback, trying to understand, falling silent at last. Then, softly, she began to sing.

We arrived at my place, and though worn out they showed the sudden efficiency of seasoned travelers, shed their sandals by the door and walked about barefoot. Swiftly they unloaded their luggage. They picked up the sleepy child and quickly, both together, undressed him, put him in some kind of stitched-up sheet like a little shroud, and laid him on my bed. Then, as though suddenly discovering the immensity of their fatigue, they began to undress right in front of me, moved half naked through the small flat, dawn breaking. They spread blankets over the rug, and I glimpsed her bare breasts, very white, and she sent me a tired smile, and all at once I lost my own sleepiness, all desire for sleep. I shut the door on them and began to wander about in the small area left me, waiting for the sun's first signs. They had fallen into a deep sleep, and before I left for school I went over and covered their bare feet. At noon I returned very tired and found them still sleeping, all three of them. I had lunch by myself, lay down beside the child who was wet by now and tried to get some sleep, but failed. I got up and began to search through their luggage, to see what they had brought, a book perhaps, or a magazine, but after a few minutes my hands wearied.

Toward nightfall I could bear their silence no longer. Softly I opened the door and approached them. They lay apart, submerged, catching up on the time they had lost in their journey 'round the world. Once again I bent down to cover my daughter-in-law's feet, but I turned back the blanket under which my son lay.

Little by little he awoke, naked, hairy, heavy, his breathing labored, opened his eyes at last and discovered me in the half-light standing over him, looking down. He gave a brief start as though for an instant not recognizing me. "How are things with you?" he whispered from the floor.

"Still at school, every morning, the principal doesn't say anything," I whispered in one breath.

For a moment he was puzzled, even though I used to write to him about everything, devotedly, all the details. Perhaps he never read my letters. The silence grew, no sound except the breathing of the young woman by his side who had thrown off her blanket again. Little by little he recovered his composure, slowly pulled the blanket over himself. His eyes smiled.

"And you're still teaching Bible there? . . ."

(Already he had nothing to say to me.)

"Yes, of course. Only Bible."

"In that case," still smiling, "everything's as usual."

"Yes, as usual," and another long silence. "Except of course for my pupils getting killed," I spat out the words in a whisper.

He closed his eyes. Then he sat up, huddled in his blanket, his beard wild, picked up a pipe

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and thrust it in his mouth, began to muse, like an ancient prophet, explaining to me that the war wouldn't go on, hadn't I noticed the signs, couldn't go on any longer. And now his wife woke up also, sitting beside him, draping herself, like him, in the blanket, offering me a smile full of light, ready to make contact, join the conversation, explain her viewpoint right then and there, without pausing to get washed or to have coffee, her eyes still heavy with sleep, in the shimmer of spring twilight, in the littered room filled with their warmth.

IV

STRIDING through the corridors to the office, a little mourning-procession, I in the middle, like a precious guest, a captive. And classroom doors open a crack as though under the pressure of the studies within, and teachers' faces, blackboards, students' faces, the entire school watching me as though discovering me anew.

The principal insists on accompanying me home. Abandons the school, his humming empire, and takes my arm in the street, carries my briefcase, my jacket, the tattered Bible. There are tears in his eyes, as though not my son but his had fallen. At every crossing I try to detach myself. That's enough, I say, but he insists on tagging after me as if afraid to leave me alone. At my gate, under a blue morning sky, we come to a halt at last, sit down like two large gray moss-grown rocks, with the words of condolence that he does not believe in and I do not hear hanging above us like a vapor.

Finally, silence, his last word spent. I collect my things from him—jacket, Bible, briefcase—urge him to return to his students, but still he refuses to take his leave, as though detecting signs of a new collapse in me, in my silence. I stretch out my hand and he grasps it and does not let go, seizes me in a tight grip as though unable to part from me ever again.

I leave him by the gate, enter, and discover an unfamiliar kind of light in my flat, the light of a weekday morning. I let down the blinds (he is still standing by the gate), undress, and take a shower, knowing that people will be coming close to me this day, touching me. For a long time I stand naked under the streaming water, my head throbbing, trying to tell his wife of his death in broken, water-swept English. I cleanse and purify myself, put on clean underwear, find a heavy black suit in the wardrobe and put it on. I peer through the blinds and see the principal still standing by the gate, rooted to the spot, sunk in thought, detached. And then I tidy up the room, disconnect the telephone, let down the remaining blinds and all of a sudden, as though someone had given me a hard push, fall down sobbing on the rug where they had lain that night. And when I get up it is as though the darkness had spread. My temples ache. Softly I call to the principal who is no longer there, who has departed and left the street empty, open to all.

AFTERWARD, supper on the porch, on a spring evening filled with scents, under the branches of a tree in flower. The three of them sit there, pink-cheeked, gorged with sleep, and I, very tired, knees trembling, bring them bread and water. From their knapsacks they have produced cans left over from their travels and have spread a meal for themselves as though they were still camping along the road—a pause between two way stations. And the toddler still in his white shroud, sitting upright, clear-eyed, prattling endlessly, arguing with the crickets in the garden.

My son, engrossed in his food, displays a sudden ravenous appetite—rummages among the cans, slices up bread, his eyes moist. In vain I try to sound him out about his work, what exactly is he researching, what he intends to teach here, whether he has perhaps made some new discovery. He sits there and smiles, begins to talk, flounders, has difficulty explaining, doesn't think I'd understand. Even if he gave me something to read on the subject, he doubts that I could follow it, especially since it is all in English. It is a matter of new kinds of experiments, a cross between history and statistics, the methods themselves so revolutionary. . . .

He goes back to his food, his beard filling with crumbs, his head bent, chewing in silence. And I sink down before him, drawn to him—over twenty-four hours without sleep—and begin to speak to him softly, desperately, in a burning voice, about the endless war, about our isolation, about the morning papers, about the inattention of my students, about the bloodshed, about my long hours in front of the classroom, about history disintegrating. And all the while the child runs on, in non-stop English, babbling and singing, beating with his knife on an empty tin can. The night fills with stars, and my daughter-in-law, wide-eyed, restless, smiles at me, does not understand a word I say but is nonetheless very intent, nodding her head eagerly. Only my son's attention wanders, the familiar absent look in his eyes, unhearing, already elsewhere, alien, adrift. . . .

The night grows deeper and deeper. Every hour on the hour I turn on the radio for the news, and the announcer's voice beats harsh and clear into the darkness. My son curses at someone there who doesn't see things his way, then gets up and starts pacing in the yard. The child has fallen silent, sitting bent over huge sheets of paper, painting the night, me, the crickets he has yet to see. My daughter-in-law, at my side again, has still not despaired of me and my English. She talks to me slowly, as if I were a backward pupil, her summery blouse open, her hair gathered at the back, a black ribbon encircling her forehead—still very much the student, of the kind I might have fallen in love with many years, aeons, ago, pursued in my heart, year after year.

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And the night draws on, like a kind of intoxication, and the dew begins to rise. Then in a sudden burst of enthusiasm she decides to sleep outside, brings blankets from the house and covers up the child who has fallen asleep with his head on his papers, puts a blanket over me as well, and over her husband, and curls up in his lap; he then, already puffing at his pipe, and thinking his own thoughts, he whose heart there is no knowing, exchanges a few rapid sentences with her in English, kisses her with frightening intensity.

I try to talk them into staying with me another day, but they cannot, must start getting organized, find an apartment, a nursery school for the child. I take leave of them, pick up the radio and go inside, get into bed and fall asleep at once. And at daybreak, half in a dream I see them loading their bundles into a black taxicab, on their way to Jerusalem.

V

And shortly afterward among the Jerusalem hills, drenched in a hard, painful, impossible light, I make my way to my dead son's house in a former border slum which has been raised up from the dust. Cobbled alleys have been paved over, ancient water holes connected to the sewerage, ruins have been turned into dwellings, and in the enclosed courtyards babies crawl. I find the place at last, touch the ironwork door and it opens, and I lose my breath because the news has caught in my throat. Softly I enter an apartment turned upside-down for cleaning—bunched-up curtains, chairs propped up on tables, flowerpots on the couch. Broom, dustpan, bucket, rag, strewn about the room. The radio blares Arabic in a great lilting chorus and drums, heroic songs. An Arab cleaning woman, very old, is wildly beating a red carpet. His wife is not there, nor is the child. My strength is ebbing, I stumble over the big tiles worn smooth by generations. And from great depths, through the loud singing, I try to dredge up forgotten Arabic words *"Ya isma'i . . . el wallad . . . ibni . . . maath . . ."* (listen . . . the child . . . my son . . . dead . . .).

It is amazing that my cry does not frighten her, that she understands at once that I belong here, that I am entitled to be here—perhaps she perceives traces of others in my features. Slowly she approaches me, carpet-beater in hand, an old crone (where did they dig her up?), her face crumpled, deaf apparently, for the radio is still going full blast. Again I shout something, point to the radio, and she goes over to it at once, stoops by an elaborate device, turns the knobs till the singing dies down and only the sound of drums still rumbles from some hidden speaker. Then she turns back to me, a withered monkey, bent, swathed in skirts, her head covered with a large kerchief, waiting.

"Ibni . . ." I try again and fall silent, tears choking me. I begin to move through the apartment, among upturned chairs, dripping flowerpots, cartons (still not unpacked), transformers, records, exploring amid this American clutter the apartment I never knew, and she in my wake, with the thudding drums, barefoot, still holding the carpet-beater, picking things up from under my feet, moving chairs, letting down curtains, and increasing the confusion beyond repair.

I reach the bedroom and find the bedding in disorder, long dresses strewn about, the imprint of her body on the sheet, the pillow; and in a corner still the unvarying cartons, one on top of another.

The place will have to be arranged for mourning.

I sit down on the bed, studying the vaulting lines, begin to figure out the structure of the building; the old woman is by my side, concerned that I not be left alone, wanting to help, to serve me, hoping I might lie down, perhaps, so that she might cover me. Once more I try to explain very softly.

"Ibni maath . . . walladi. . . ."

Finally she understands. *"El zreir?"* (the little one?) she asks, as though I had many sons.

I stand up in despair and try to send her away, but she has already grown attached to me—such faithfulness—because I am such an old man, perhaps; she awaits orders, apparently used to never understanding what is said to her in this house, but totally overcome when she sees me begin to tidy up the room—folding the bedclothes (I discover a telephone among the twisted blankets and disconnect it), spreading a rug over the bed, returning clothes to cartons and discovering in one of them a horde of diapers, great new stacks of them in transparent wrappers, as if they had planned to beget an entire tribe.

And in the next room still the beating of drums.

The old woman is restless, fidgets about, wanting to help and not knowing how, begins to speak suddenly, or to sob, or scream, repeats the same phrase over and over, tirelessly, till I understand. She thought I had meant the child.

"La, la, la zreir" (no, no, not the little one). I lean toward her, breathing the scorched smell of dead bonfires in her clothes, *"Abuhu . . ."* (his father . . .).

But at this she seems stricken tenfold:

"Eish abuhu . . .?" (how, his father . . .?)—stunned, unbelieving, taking a step backward.

But I am seized with a sudden anxiety for the child, want to look for him, want to bring him back home at once. Instantly she grasps my intention, and pulls me to the door; on the doorstep facing the little alleys, gesturing and yelling, she shows me the way to the nursery school.

A room swept with sun, smelling of bananas—the story hour; in a circle, tiny chairs, arms folded, all in blue. I haven't identified him yet—all of them very still, listening raptly to the slow, confident, melodious voice of a little teacher. It is

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years since I have known so deep a silence among children, had not imagined them capable of it.

Dropping into all this, me, in black, flushed, stepping over piles of huge blocks, still trying to spot him. Something cracks in me, here of all places, and I want to sink down beside the little towels hung up in a row, under the paintings scattered on the wall. Then the short cry of the teacher.

A misfortune in our family—

Before dawn—

But she, pale, misses the name, thinks I am rambling, thinks I belong at another nursery school perhaps; but then he stands up, rises like a slender stalk from his place, arms still folded, very grave, silently admits to the connection between us, listens to the teacher who has suddenly understood, has gone over to put her arms around him, addresses him in English, picks him up, lifts him out of the circle.

At once the little lunch-box is hung round his neck, a blue cap placed on his head; he asks for something in his language and is immediately given a painting he made that morning, and through the mist that veils my eyes I see—the page is filled with a red sun showering sparks in all directions. His little hand in mine, my fingers closing over it. They have given him to me, though I have told them scarcely anything and could have been any old man entering a nursery school and wanting to take away a child.

BACK in their apartment. Soundless, barefoot, the Arab woman pads about the kitchen. The child is with her, eating an early lunch. Now and then a few soft phrases reach me, she talking in Arabic, he answering her in English. Distant noises from the open windows. We are waiting only for her. Everything will be turned upside down here in a day or two, people will fill the rooms. In a month or two nothing will remain. She will stow the child in a rucksack and go back to where she came from. I find his study, go in and shut the door. It is dim and cool in here. Stacks of books on the floor, the desk littered with papers. He left everything as it was and went to the army. Confusion of generations. I walk around his desk, lightly touch his papers. Who could make order out of this chaos—it is fifteen years since I last inspected his school notebooks. Vainly I try to let in some light, but the blind is stuck, refuses to open. I come back to the desk. What had he been working on, what was he planning, how do I link up with all of this? I touch the first layer and at once telephone bills, electric bills, university circulars, come fluttering down. I peel off a second layer—accounts, thick unfamiliar magazines in English, pictures of men posing for advertisements, some half naked, all of them long-haired, fat and lean revolutionaries displaying unusual ties or striped trousers, small electrical appliances of doubtful purpose. Suddenly I find a pipe of his, the smell of unknown tobacco. Tokens of my son's mystery. Son, child of mine. Another dizzy spell. My eyes grow dim. I return to the window and try with all my might to pull the blind loose. Motes of light, a thin current of air; through the slats I catch an unfamiliar view of a valley, and beyond it some new university buildings. I return to my rummaging in his desk: transcripts sent by colleagues; tables of statistical data. These also I shall have to try and read. Notes in his handwriting, titles of books. New ideological manifestoes. I stuff some of this into my pockets. And now something genuinely his, a sheaf of papers in his handwriting, half in English, half in Hebrew, entitled "Prophecy and Politics." A new book perhaps, or an article. I pull open drawers, perhaps there will be a personal diary as well, but they turn out to be almost empty. More pipes, a broken camera, old bottles of pills, and snapshots of his girl-wife—by some trees, by a hill, a car, a river. And behind the pictures, in a far corner of the drawer, I find a sharp little penknife, inscribed with the word PEACE.

The front door opens, and the house fills with the sound of light steps and with her laughter. The child's singsong, then the hectic whispering of the Arab woman. Now light streams in at me from the opening door. And she—in a light dress, still hot and sweaty from walking, her bag on her shoulder, sunglasses covering her eyes, very much the tourist. She stands there surprised at the depth of my intrusion, attempts a smile for me at once, but I am buried in the chair, behind the desk, black-suited, heavy, the knife between my fingers.

She takes a few quick steps toward me but suddenly stops, having sensed something; dread seizes her, as though she perceives the marks of death upon me.

"Something wrong—" her voice trembles, as though it were I on the point of death, concealing a mortal wound beneath my garments.

And I straighten up, drop the knife; a burst of hot light hits me; I begin to move past her, mumble the morning's tidings in an ancient, biblical Hebrew, and know she will not understand—the words dart back at me. I am filled with pity for them, stroke the child's hair, incline my head before the old Arab woman, and am drawn onward to the hot light in the rooms, through the still open front door, toward the looming valley, to the university. I will have to enlist their help.

In a straight line, almost as the crow flies, I cross the valley toward the university, and in a tangle of thicket, at the bottom of a teeming ditch, for a moment I lose sight of the sky. Suddenly I think of you and you alone, ardently, hungrily. My son killed, mine only son. Out of the depths I cry, noon is passing, the Sabbath is near, and in Jerusalem they still know nothing of your death. Your wife has not grasped the news. I was wrong, I should have let the authorities perform their duty.

Rocks here, and a very steep slope, and bushes

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growing out of an invisible earth tangling underfoot. Who would have imagined there could be such a wilderness so close to the university?

At last I have seen your papers. You were mistaken to think I would not understand, I understood at once, and I am inspired, inflamed, in despair. You came back a prophet. I am at one with you, son of man, I have filled my pockets with your notes, I shall learn English properly, go up into the mountains and wait for the wind.

VI

I CRASH through the barbed-wire fence surrounding the university, behind one of the marble buildings, a gnarled branch in my hand; *it is a long time since I have been here*, and I am confounded by the complex of buildings. I start looking for your department, wander along corridors, among cylinders of oxygen, dim laboratories, small libraries, humming computers, while the campus empties before my eyes.

Outside the main library, defeated, I accost a hurrying, book-laden professor, but he has never heard your name and, embarrassed, he shows me the way to the faculty offices. There a flock of clerks, on the verge of leaving, listen attentively, advise me that the switchboard is already closed and they are not authorized to handle such matters, perhaps I had better go to the police. And suddenly I realize that they take me for a madman, or for one of those perpetual students, a crank trying to draw attention to himself—in a black suit, dusty, clutching a branch. The branch in particular seems suspicious.

I throw it away at once, in the middle of the square, and hurry back to the faculty building, into a lighted lobby with tiers of balconies. On the topmost balcony a stout porter moves about letting down the blinds. From down below, shouting, I ask him about you, and he *has* heard your name, knows you by sight at least. "The professor with the wild beard," he says, and comes down, jangling his keys, then takes me up to your office at the end of a corridor. On the door I find a long list of students who want to consult you, next to it a typed notice of your absence due to reserve duty, and down the side a list of books you have assigned pending your return. I turn all these papers over and across the blank expanse write a first death notice, my beloved. The porter reads over my shoulder and at once brings me additional thumbtacks to fasten the papers to the door.

We descend the stairs, and I tell him all about you, our steps echoing in the empty building. The dusky light is pleasant, gentle to the eyes; I hang back, wavering, I would linger here awhile, but the porter, suddenly impatient, turns me out firmly, back into the sun.

From a great distance, beyond the summer clouds, as from an aerial photograph I look down upon myself. A tiny speck, abandoning the pale cubes of the university buildings and rolling slowly through a great splash of asphalt. An intersection. And all about—the heart of the government, a pile of offices, the red-hued parliament, the sheer white museum, pine trees like soft moss, hills eroded at the edges, blasted rock, ribbons of road one on top of the other. A black dot comes spewing smoke from the east, stops beside the speck, and swallows it.

It is an old taxi, some charred relic, and I drop onto torn and sweaty upholstery and give the driver my directions.

South. Through the stifling air one sees the stubbornness. Cemetery Mount, twisted lines of graves like a wild scrawl, and on all sides more buildings, housing projects, scaffolds, cranes. Houses coupling with houses. The Kingdom of Heaven by dint of stone. The driver—an unshaven boor, ageless, cracking sunflower seeds—hums beneath his breath, peers at me constantly in his mirror, ready for talk. But I shut my eyes.

The taxi worms its way down the slope, leaving a thick trail of exhaust behind it. The hospital comes into view. A red rock was dropped there once and became a windowed dam, hushed in the midday air: a small helicopter hovers above it like a bird of prey.

I doze, dream. The car rattles, its doors shake, the windows slide down. The hum of the springs sends the driver's spirits soaring and, having given up on me, he starts singing aloud, unashamed, banging vigorously on the steering-wheel.

But I am on the heights, scanning the view. Long valleys stretch from Jerusalem to Mount Hebron, pouring themselves out, delving into the bare eternal hills. Olive groves, stone fences, flocks of sheep, the beauty of it, ancient kingdom unchanging for thousands of years, and in the same glance, higher up, the sea is revealed and the mouth of the desert. This fearful land seizes me mightily.

I touch the driver lightly, and his singing is cut short at once. I begin to talk. He does not understand at first, thinks I have gone out of my mind. But over the short distance remaining to the hospital I succeed in telling him the essentials.

Yes, at thirty-one—
My only son—
Before dawn—

VII

THEY were waiting for me, as indeed they had said they would this morning; in the heart of the tiled compound, in the heart of the mountains, an army chaplain, burly, his beard red and savage, a prophet clad in khaki stands against the sun, waiting. When I arrive in my taxi he spots me at once, as though tragedy had marked me out already, hurries to catch me before I vanish through one of the glass doors gaping on all sides.

"You the father?"

"I am the father."

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"Alone?"

"Alone."

He is astounded. His eyes burn. How can it be? How could they have let me come alone? For it isn't merely a matter of identification but of the final leave-taking as well.

I know, but have no answer—only cling to him with speechless fervor. At last a real rabbi, a man of God at my disposal. Silently I attach myself to his sweat-stained clothes, lightly touch his officer's insignia, and he, surprised at my clutching hands, surprised too at my weakness, palpable through my hot clothes, puts his arm around me in embarrassment, his shoulders sagging, tears in his eyes, and slowly, in the same embrace, he turns me toward the sun's radiance pouring out of the west, and softly pulls me inside.

An enormous, empty elevator; at once we sink slowly to the depths, no longer touching each other, he beside the panel of buttons, I in the far corner, an empty stretcher between us.

He listens, his head to one side, his face blank, his eyes extinguished. I am apparently talking again, not listening to myself, mechanically, probing the pain, the words happening far away, on some vague horizon, words already spoken several times today: thirty-one years old, almost a professor. Only son, though saw little of him these past few years. Only a few months back from the United States, grown a beard, hardly recognized him. Beloved son. Now he leaves his wife, an American, young, obscure. Leaving a child. Leaving manuscripts, unfinished research, cartons scattered through his house. Enough to drive one mad. Our children getting killed and we are left with their possessions. . . .

I am still speaking of him as though he were far away, lying in some desert somewhere, as though he weren't a couple of yards from me, as though I weren't moving toward him in a slow but certain fall, arrested at last with a soft jolt that kindles the chaplain's eyes anew. The doors part automatically before us.

He grabs me. I must have shown signs of wanting to slip away. He leads me through lighted corridors, a basement filled with the breathing of engines. In the passages sudden gusts of wind assault us. In a small office people rise to greet us, doctors, officials, bow their heads when they see me enter, close their eyes for an instant. Some retreat at once, begin to slip off, some, on the contrary, are drawn toward me, want to touch me. The chaplain whispers: "This is the father, he's come alone," and I, terrified, start mumbling again, the familiar litany. At once someone steps nearer, to listen, and a hush falls.

There is a wonderful gentleness in their attitude toward me, the way they place me in a chair, put a skullcap on my head, the swiftness with which they extract the identity card from my clothes, make a note of something, open a side-door; when they help me up I feel weightless, floating, led by their hands into a chamber with a bare concrete floor, hospital screens everywhere, the beating of white wings.

I shiver.

There is the unmistakable sound of rushing water in the room, as from underground springs.

The blood—

The child. This curse fallen upon me.

Someone is already standing beside one of the screens, draws a curtain aside, turns the blanket down, and I am still at a distance, suffused with a dreadful curiosity, my breath faint, fading, heart almost still, slip from the hands holding me, glide softly, irresistibly, to look at the pale face of a murdered youth, naked under the blanket, at thin lines of blood encircling blank, half-open eyes. I shrink back slightly, the skullcap slips from my head.

A deep hush. Everyone is watching me. The chaplain stands motionless, his hand in his lab coat, any moment now he will produce a ram's horn, blow a feeble blast.

"It isn't him . . ." I whisper at last with infinite astonishment, with growing despair, with the murmur of the water flowing in this cursed room.

SOMEONE turns on more lights, as though it were simply a question of light. The silence continues. No one, I realize, wants to understand me.

"It isn't him," I say again, say without voice, without breath, gasping for air, "You must have made a mistake. . . ."

At last they understand, and they are amazed. The chaplain falls upon a scrap of paper attached to the stretcher; he reads the name aloud.

"Only the name is right. . . ." Still whispering, I step back, and in the deep silence, the murmur of unseen flowing water, the sweet smell of decay, I return to the office which has already become my oasis.

Behind my back the chaplain begins to curse at someone and the group falls away.

Friday afternoon, and though I see neither sun nor mountains, I know—we are on the outskirts of town, deep in the vault of a hospital that leans heavily into a wild, plunging wadi. The people around me want to go home, the nearer the Sabbath the further the town draws away from them. They had waited for me patiently, knowing the ceremony would be brief, a few seconds—enter, look, weep, part; sign a paper perhaps, because somewhere the evidence must be entered. I am not the first to come here after all, nor the last.

Now I am delaying them. How distressing to see people enter the room with lowered eyes, like guilty convicts. And when they see me sitting in the corner words fail them. Such a terrible mistake. Behind the walls I hear the whirring of bells, frantic telephoning. They are trying to sort out the confusion before I begin to nourish false hopes.

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But I nourish nothing. I straighten up suddenly and stand on my feet, watching the others in silence. It is just a truce, I tell myself, a little cease-fire. They are dismayed at my rising, believe I am about to turn violent, are already resigned to it, but I am nothing of the kind; I start moving slowly and dazedly about the room, from one wall to another, like a dog, find a plate on a desk with a few stale biscuits, take one and start munching. I have eaten nothing since morning.

It sticks in my throat, like chewing dust or ashes, dust mingled with ashes. I begin to retch.

They have been waiting for this, they are ready, apparently they are accustomed to it. They sit me down at once, clean me off, offer smelling-salts.

"It isn't my son . . ." I mumble, my face drained of blood.

Again the chaplain appears, looking very somber, his eyes glowing, desperate, his beard unkempt, his cap awry, the badges on his shoulder shining; in a low voice he invites me to return to the chamber of the murmuring water.

Now I am confronted with three screens. The light is glaring, they have turned it up full thinking again that it is a matter of light, that by means of light I shall be convinced. Never has such a thing happened to them, and they suspect some fearful muddle may be at the bottom of it. And again I stagger. The shed blood. My son. This curse. And again my breathing grows faint, fades, my heart still. I glide softly from stretcher to stretcher, lost faces, young men, like the faces in my class, only the eyes closed, rolled slightly upward.

Not him—

They take me back to the first stretcher again, as if really resolved to drive me out of my mind.

"I'm sorry. . . ." I falter and collapse against the chaplain, against the open water channels running along the walls that my eyes detect at last.

VIII

I BELIEVE I must explore again the moment I first learned of his death. Summer morning, the sky torn wide from one end of the horizon to the other. June, the final days of school. I rise late, languid, faintly dazed, unaware of time, straight into the glare of light.

I climb the school steps after the bell has died. An echo still lingers among the treetops, in the dim green air. I walk through the emptying corridors, among the last stragglers hurrying to their classrooms, make my way slowly to my senior class, sense their nervousness already from afar, their restless murmuring.

Those huddling in the doorway spy me from a distance and curse, then hurry inside to warn the others. A last squeal from the girls. I am already in the doorway, and they stand tensely by their seats, the white sheets of paper spread on their desks like flags of surrender, their Bibles stowed away deep inside.

I greet them, they sit down. I call one of the girls and she approaches, long-haired, delicate, wordlessly takes the test papers from me, passes noiselessly between the rows distributing them. The silence deepens, heads bend. The frozen hush and excitement of a first quick appraisal.

I know; it is a hard test. Never before have I composed such a cruel examination.

Slowly they raise their eyes. Their faces start to burn, amazement seizes them. They exchange despairing glances. Some of them raise their hands, but I, standing over them high on my platform, cut them short with a gesture. They are dumbfounded, they fail to grasp my purpose. I silence them before they can utter a word, each of them forlorn in his seat. And suddenly, as though it were simply light they needed, someone gets up and pulls the curtains. But it is no help; the light trickling in only exasperates them further. They try writing something, nibble at their pens, then give up, a few already tearing up their papers. Someone rises and leaves the room with face aflame. Another follows, and a third; suddenly it seems they are rebelling.

At that moment the quick steps of the principal are heard, as though the news had reached him. He opens the door and enters, very pale, out of breath, does not look at the class but makes straight for me, mounts the platform, takes hold of me; for three years we haven't spoken and suddenly he clasps me to him hard, before the eyes of the astonished pupils. Whispers to me: Just a moment . . . leave them . . . never mind . . . come with me. . . .

IX

ONE course of action: don't insist. Release these people, give them time; don't struggle against the waning sun, let the Sabbath descend in peace, let the rabbi go home. Depart for the time being, come down from the mountains, arrive in the evening, steal softly through our shadowy street. Enter the house through the back door, undress, don't think, don't speak, wait, the telephone disconnected, the door locked. Make the bed, try to sleep; wait for a new, more authoritative message.

A second choice: demand, shout, rend my garments. Assail the chaplain, the others, insist on immediate verification. Organize a search party, a procession through the streets of Jerusalem on Sabbath eve, from one hospital to the next, comb the cellars, descend into hell, find him.

Yet another choice: do nothing. Simply continue lying on this stretcher, covered with a blanket, in this hospital, in one of the small rooms. There, someone is already holding a glass of water to my lips.

I open my eyes. It is the chaplain, a wild, woe-

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begone prophet, surrounded by doctors; he puts a glass to my lips with his own hands, with infinite tenderness.

He feels they owe me some explanation.

But he has none.

Groping in the dark.

Can't think of the words.

Nothing like this has ever happened to him.

The people here are also baffled.

Something very deep has gone awry.

Telephone calls will solve nothing, he knows. What must be done is to return to the sources: to the company, to the regiment, maybe even to the platoon itself.

My suffering is great, but who knows, perhaps out of it a new birth may come.

No, he had not wanted to use that expression, it is too weighty. He is very much afraid of raising false hopes.

There is a wonderful midrash, full of wisdom, only he's loath to trouble me now.

Such violent times, appalling.

Runs from one funeral to the next.

Nights, he sits at home composing eulogies.

And he bends over me: staying here, on this stretcher, rolled up in a blanket, serves no purpose. We ought to go to Jerusalem. If possible before the onset of the Sabbath.

He suggests therefore that I get hold of myself, that is, if I still have the strength left. That I remove the blanket, get off the stretcher. They won't leave me to wander about alone any more.

My status, incidentally, is dubious from the standpoint of religious law as well—should my garment be rent or not? To be on the safe side, to ward off false optimism, and again, before the Sabbath sets in.

He takes a small penknife from his pocket, removes the blanket from me, and as I lie there, with everyone looking on, he makes a long tear in my coat, next to my heart.

We start the ascent, out of the depths, in the same elevator and at the same slow speed, stumble out into the same compound and find a different light, different air, signs of a new silence. And as we climb up out of the valley, out of the heart of the mountains, the sun climbs with us, caught on the roof of the chaplain's small military car. He drives zealously, sounding his horn to the heavens, his beard blowing, the steering-wheel dug into his stomach; he hurtles in between near-empty buses, trying to overtake the Sabbath which descends upon him from the hazy eastern sky.

There is something desolate about the summery streets of Jerusalem vanquished by the Sabbath's might. I think of my house, of our street at this hour, decked in greenery, with a heavy perfume of blossoms, a swish of cars being washed, the water murmuring along the curb. Suddenly, there is a hint of autumn, clouds caught in pines and cypresses. We burst at a gallop into a large empty military camp spread out over a hill. At just that moment the Sabbath siren rises from the town like a wail. The chaplain stops the car at once, turns off the engine, lets his hands drop from the wheel, listens to the sound as if to some new revelation, then goes to find the person in charge.

But there is no one, only barracks with boarded-up windows, stretches of cracked and barren concrete, and small yellow signs with military post-office numbers. The army has migrated to the front lines and left only whitewashed remnants behind, and legends on blank walls: COMPANY A., MESS, QUARTERMASTER, SYNAGOGUE.

Torn, sagging wire fences, and weeds rustling underfoot. I trail behind the chaplain who walks around the barracks, knocks on imaginary doors, recedes from view, becomes lost and then reappears, his beard shining through the trees.

And I, who never served in the army, and in the War of Independence merely stood beside the roadblocks, double up at last on a rock in the center of a crumbling parade ground, the torn flap dangling on my breast, and the smell of ancient armies all around.

Such despair—

This sad hush around me—

And then, as though sprung from the soil, people collect about me, hairy half-naked soldiers, their shoelaces untied, carrying towels and tiny transistors purring Sabbath songs, weary drivers emerging from one of the barracks on their way to the shower. In the middle of the parade ground they silently surround me, and once again, dusty and tired, I tell the same story: thirty-one. Informed of his death this morning. Lecturer at the university. Left a wife and child. They know nothing yet. Came to Jerusalem myself to identify him, and then found—it's not him. . . .

Their amazement—

The towels crumple in their hands—

"What do you mean, not him?"

"Not him. Not his body. Someone else's."

"Who?"

"How should I know?"

"And what about him?"

"That's what I'm asking. Maybe you know someone who could help."

They tremble. Something in the story has shaken them, hairy men with towels and soap-dishes, they silence the transistors at once, forget their shower, take me by the arms and raise me up, supporting me, cursing the army. Never in their lives have they heard of such a thing happening. One of them recalls having seen the jeep of the company's intelligence officer under a tree somewhere, and at once they take me there. In a grove, beneath the foliage, beside a locked barracks-turned-storehouse, the jeep stands, loaded with machine guns and ammunition, its front wheels grazing the door. They try to break down the door but fail, break a window, and peer into a dim room filled with boxes of ammunition. There in the corner a camp-bed. Someone leaps into the

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room and wakes up a boy in khaki, a lean officer, curled up like a fetus, in his clothes, shoes, a revolver on his thigh, asleep amid the explosives.

He wakes up at once, opens his eyes, and says nothing. They speak excitedly to him, shouting, pointing their fingers at me, standing fixed outside, by the window, like a frozen figure. But he does not look at me. He sits bent over on the bed in his crumpled clothes, indifferent to the general excitement. Only when the confusion of voices dies down, and the wind is suddenly heard whispering in the pines, does he begin to speak to me from a distance in a slow, quiet voice.

"What's your name?"

I tell him.

"What's his?"

I tell him.

"And it's not him?"

"Not him."

"Who brought you here?"

"The chaplain."

His eyes darken, a lengthy silence, and at last very softly:

"And what do you want?"

"To find him. . . ."

He does not react, it's as if he'd fallen asleep again. He gets up, tired, dreamy, but suddenly, assuming the air of a general, he folds up the blanket, opens the door which he had locked from inside, goes out, and vanishes among the pines, into their soft whisperings. The drivers follow, find him by a rusty tap half buried under a drift of dead pine-needles, holding his head under it and letting the cool water splash over him. Then he steps aside, not looking, letting the drops trickle off him. Now the drivers are ready to hit him. But with the water drying, his eyes quickening, his head bent, he has made up his mind already, and in a quiet voice starts giving orders to the astonished men. He sends one to find the wandering chaplain, orders another to bring the jeep around and fill it with gas; the others have already seized me, lifting me up as though I were a paraplegic. They clear a place for me in the jeep, wedging me in among a greasy machine gun, cartridge cases, and grenades, put a helmet on my head, and secure the strap firmly under my chin.

Someone switches on the field radio by my side and it stirs into life with a thin shriek. Then, as though of its own accord, slowly, imperceptibly, the jeep begins to move. From somewhere, at the last minute, they have come up with the chaplain, also sweat-drenched, lost, burnt out, dreaming of his Sabbath. He too joins the slow procession, lagging a little behind. They are taking me away from him and he yields me up, gives the journey his blessing. What is to be done? He has found no one at headquarters, tried to get in touch with his superiors and failed. But he has left instructions behind, written out a detailed account.

He trudges behind the slow jeep, through the trees, the field radio humming. What else? What else is bothering him? It appears that something has turned up after all, the dead man's service file, lying on a table. And a sudden thought strikes him—maybe it's all a mistake, maybe only the name is the same but it's not my son. And maybe it would be wise if, before going down into the desert, I took a look at the picture at least. And he pushes a small khaki folder into my hands, and the men crowd around to look at it with me. I open it to the first page and find the picture of a slim boy, just out of high school, fifteen years back, my son, in khaki shirt, cropped hair, gazing at me with obstinate eyes.

THE TIME is half-past-five in the afternoon. A tall antenna scratches the last of the sun over the treetops. A hesitant jeep crosses Jerusalem in search of a missing person, someone to nullify the purpose of its journey, and meanwhile an orange-red Jerusalem Sabbath is trampled under dusty wheels.

Passers-by stop to gaze at the elderly civilian, dressed in black, helmeted, his eyes red with weeping. There is something in the way I grip the machine gun that seems to menace these Jerusalemites—the Jews in the western half first, then the Arabs; as if I intended to mow them down, I who do not even know where the trigger is.

I ask the little officer.

He shows me.

I finger it.

(So tiny.)

And then the final collapse into Sabbath beyond East Jerusalem, the last signs of green dissolving, and the stark white of bare stone houses, of pale powdery soil at the roadside, bluish smoke from invisible fires in courtyards, and near them Arabs, glancing up and away from us. At last, my solemn and fully-armed entrance into the Jordan Valley, where I have never yet set foot. I look for signs of a dead, distant, biblical deity among the arid hills flanking the road, in the sun-cracked face of an elderly soldier raising the barrier.

Now, I have been waiting for this, I know, I know, a great burst of speed, a resurgence. The jeep spins forward, and the officer, as if wrestling, his lips set tight, eyes narrowed, starts driving wildly, greedily. I cling to the gun in the face of a great sweeping wind, thrust my hand into my clothes and start weeding out papers—bus tickets, old receipts, lists of students' names, notes from my son's desk, the draft of a speech, a copy of the morning's examination.

And then, at last, the army proper, in the failing light. The sad pellucid desert light dying over a camp of tents, barracks, tanks and half tracks, and immense towering antennas, and smoke spiraling from a chimney. Old, scorched soldiers in outsize overalls raise still another barrier before us, as though the desert were carved up by barriers. People crowd around, they were expecting us. They even run after the jeep.

"The old father's arrived!" someone shouts, as if I were a sacred figure.

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Before long they have unloaded me, detached me carefully from the machine gun, loosened the cartridge-belt that has coiled itself around me, removed a bullet which I have inserted into the barrel by mistake. Then they lower me, dusty and old, my helmet askew, and lead me in the gathering darkness to their commanding officer.

Suddenly, far in the distance, beyond the hills, shots resound.

My heart freezes.

Such warmth in the touch of their hands on my body, such is their joy that a really old man has come among them, in a helmet, a civilian in their desert night. They dare to whisper, as if it were a sinful thought: "He's not been killed," "It isn't he," "You've been misled. . . ."

But the commander's voice asserts itself, carries firmly through the newly-fallen darkness, and although I can't see his face, listening to a voice I've heard before somewhere, a former student, doubtless, I nearly identify him, impossible that I should not—

The encounter took place at night (he says) and the body was transferred to the hospital before dawn. The men hardly know one another. Some of them haven't been with the unit for years. The clerk was given only an identity-tag to go by, and that's what set the documents moving. He never looked at the dead man's face. They just assumed everything was in order, up until about an hour ago, when the phone call came from headquarters in Jerusalem saying we were on the way. At once they put their entire radio network into action. The men are scattered over a huge area. They inquired about the name right away, was there anyone answering to this name, and then, just a while back, someone was found. A man of thirty-one, from Jerusalem. His serial number, too, corresponded to that of the dead man. That is, the tags must have got switched somehow. And they'll still have to get to the bottom of that. They asked no more questions, did not want to alarm him or tell him his family had already been informed. But they are certain it is my son. Bound to be. And so long as I'm here, maybe I'd better see him with my own eyes after all. That way everybody's mind will be at ease. And better before the night is through. Look, he's with the patrol, they'll be here soon, and they've already arranged for them to be waiting a little distance from here, so if I've come as far as this forward position . . . maybe I should go on just a bit further . . . that is, if I have the strength . . . Here, get up on this armored car. . . . The word had come down from command about my pluck, considering. . . .

Suddenly it strikes me. He is afraid of me. This silence of mine, the endless patience, the way I stand there facing him, limp, demanding nothing; the passivity with which I still wear the crushing helmet on my head. Something has gone wrong within his sphere of command and he is alarmed by the tyranny of my silence.

And again, from the distance—long volleys, strung out, echoes splintering.

This time it is a heavy half-track they take me to. They open an iron door, install me, seal the armored slits. Two or three soldiers clamber up and sit beside the machine guns, someone bends over the field radio and starts muttering.

With infinite slowness, lights extinguished, tracks churning, me cooped in an iron hutch, dark except for the glimmer of a tiny red bulb—I understand. We are returning to the Jordan, they want to send me over to the other side, take me to the source. All that has happened has been prelude.

SUDDENLY we stop. The engine falls silent. Someone lowers himself and opens the iron door from outside, releasing me. A junction of dirt-tracks, desert and yet non-desert, reeds and shrubs in a narrow ditch beside the road. And silence, no shooting, and a light breeze, and a star-studded sky. We wait. Crouched low upon stones beside the track, in the thicket. And once again I find myself delivered into new hands. Someone neither young nor old. An intelligent, sympathetic face, watching me intently, smiling. Something about me seems to amuse him, the helmet perhaps. I attempt to pry it loose. The smile persists. It turns out to be my age that bothers him.

"Seventy years old."

Sabbath eve. Matches flicker on the half-track, cigarettes are lighted. The soldiers are talking in low voices, cursing softly, calculating the number of Sabbaths still remaining to them here. The field radio splutters feebly, someone distant signaling, "Can you hear me? Hear me?" but no one takes the trouble to reply.

What do I do?

I tell him.

He smiles. He had thought as much.

"It's my Hebrew," I say quietly.

What about it?

"Some rhetorical flourishes still left, perhaps."

No, he smiles, not at all, but the eyes, the expression in them. He used to have a history teacher with just the same look.

"What history?"

"Jewish history."

"And he looked like me?"

"Yes."

"Despite the difference?"

"What difference?"

"Between history and Bible."

"Why a difference?"

And I rise, the torn flap drops from my heart, I begin to explain with quiet fervor.

THEN out of the vastness a murmur arises, and from the east or the west or the north—I have lost my bearings—the patrol arrives, shining, in a cloud of dust, two or three armored vehicles, with growing clatter, in the darkness, now and then casting a strong beam of

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light at the edges of the road, then playing about the arid hills and toward the sky.

And there, in that booming clatter, my son must be too. A thirty-one-year-old private whose desk is piled with research notes is now stuck in a half-track, beside a machine gun or mortar, flashing a beacon at me and aiming his gun my way.

Their beam falls on us.

Someone fires a shot in our direction. They have forgotten who we are, take us for infiltrators. Except that everyone begins to shout with all his might.

They would have killed us.

They pull up at some distance, two half-tracks and a tank, engines roaring, and the valley stirs into life. Vague night-shapes, the faces indistinguishable. The officer beside me goes to look for the man in charge. And I, in my darkness, rooted to the spot, scan the dim silhouettes and suddenly give up, convinced it is all for nothing, tremble in every limb, ready to admit to any identification at all.

A few of the soldiers jump off to urinate on the chains, and all of a sudden I discover him among them—heavy, long-haired, somnolent, lonely, urinating alongside them.

Invisible, I make no move, watch him from a distance, knowing that his clothes must be foul. As a boy he would come home like that from hikes lasting a day or two, as filthy as if he had crossed a desert.

They have located him. The commander calls his name. He turns, buttons his pants, and comes over, a lumbering shape, Strangely enough he is not surprised to find me, his old father, late at night in a steel hat a few paces from the River Jordan.

Two officers take hold of him. The half-track engines fall silent. Suddenly there is a deep hush.

"This the one?"

"This is the one." I touch him lightly.

He smiles at us, his beard ragged, understanding nothing, very tired; he stands before me hung with grenades, the rifle dangling from his shoulder like a broomstick.

"What's happened?"

How to explain it to him.

"Anything wrong at home?"

How to tell him that I had already given him up, barged into his room, upset his papers. That I had planned to collect them into a book.

"You were reported killed. . . ."

Not I, but someone else has said it.

He does not understand, how could he, stooping a little under his gear, his helmet pushed back, his face inscrutable, his eyes holding me, like the eyes of his son, like my own eyes gazing at him. He used to look at me just that way when he was small, after a spanking.

He is asked to show his dogtags.

Gradually a crowd of soldiers collects around us.

He begins searching through his pockets with surprising meekness, takes out scraps of paper, shoelaces, rifle bullets, bits of white flannel, more flannel, sheds the flannel scraps like pieces of paper, but the dogtags fail to turn up. Lost. Though they were attached to his first-aid kit.

"Where's the kit?"

He gave it to the medic after the skirmish. It follows that he gave him the tags as well. I begin to suspect that he, too, had considered disappearing, here beside the Jordan, or perhaps it was all intended as a sign to me from afar.

They summon the medic.

From the darkness there comes a scraggly little fellow, middle-aged, embittered, smoking greedily, who does not remember a thing. Yes, some people gave him their first-aid kits, but of the tags he knows nothing. He found tags on the dead man and put them around his neck. It was pointless to bandage him in any case—halfway through he had realized that the man was dead, but he finished the job anyway. No, he hadn't identified him, doesn't know who he was. Knows hardly anyone here in fact. He himself belongs to a different company entirely and was assigned here by mistake. He wants to get back to his own unit. Why have they stuck him here in the first place? He misses his buddies, and besides, they're getting their discharge soon, and then where will he be? . . .

They get rid of him.

Little by little, in the gathering darkness, understanding comes to my son. His face lights up, his eyes clear, his body straightens. He adjusts the rifle and comes to life. And I who feel my collapse imminent want to climb onto him.

"This morning, at school, the principal informed me," I speak to him at last. "It's been a mad day. . . ."

The circle around us tightens, the men cling to us. The story of his death and resurrection thrills them. They shower the two of us with jokes, want to hear all the particulars. We both stand trembling, smiling weakly.

The officers start to break it up, sending the men back to the half-tracks. The night deepens, the patrol should be on its way, there is still a war on.

Suddenly we are alone, both of us in helmets but me unarmed, with only the torn flap over my heart.

"How are you?" I whisper rapidly, with the last of my strength.

Only now does he look at me, astounded that I have pursued him this far, and cornered him at the very border.

"You can see for yourself . . ." he whispers with something of both despair and bitterness, as though it were I who had issued the call-up orders. "Such a waste of time . . . so pointless. . . ."

How is one to provide some hint of an answer, some meaning to it all, and moreover on one foot

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as it were, in the shadow of the vehicles that now are starting up their engines again, before he disappears into the vague nighttime blue of the desert, and before I myself fall into a deep slumber in front of his very eyes?

No dreaming yet, but asleep. My heart, I mean, is asleep. I am nodding on my feet, with weakness and hunger, and I grow smaller and smaller under a star-tossed sky with the moon rising in the east. The clouds begin to move, the scene shifts and consciousness fades. Little by little the senses too are extinguished. I do not hear the shots flaring up again in the distance, do not smell these rushes or the desert mallow; whatever I am holding in my hand (a stone or a branch) drops soundlessly to the ground; it is from a figure already blurred that I take leave, fluttering my hand in defeat at the beam of light cast by one of the half-tracks, and yielding my body to anyone willing to take it (a different one again, very young) and place it back on some tank, shutting the steel plate upon me. Once again beside a red bulb, without headlights, in the dark, I begin the journey back.

It was then that I noticed for the first time that I had lost the biblical texts for the exam. Entire passages. I would not have passed a single test, not the simplest one. The last verses were slipping down, ground to pieces by the creaking chains.

After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day—

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth—

A Psalm of David when in the wilderness of Judah—

In the year that king Uzziah died—

To the Musician upon Shoshannim—

The Song of Songs—

Hallelujah—

STILL I am not allowed to dream. By the light of a clouded moon, at the forward position. I notice a civilian car, its headlights burning, its engine humming softly, no one inside. Next they are taking me, almost by force, toward one of their huge tents, and there, by the light of one pale bulb, among field radios, twisted telephone cables, and nude photographs stirring against the tent-flaps stands my daughter-in-law between the rows of beds, surrounded by signal corpsmen who are gazing enchanted at the young woman with windblown hair who has turned up at nightfall in their tent.

"He not killed," I tell her at once in my broken English, grimy, on the verge of dreams.

But she knows already, and all she wants now is to fall upon me, wild with excitement, having been certain all along that it was nothing but my own private delusion.

But I forestall her, and dumbly, drowsily, through a thousand veils, I take two steps, trip over the cables, rub against the pin-ups, fall on her, kiss her forehead, stroke her hair, and a delicate smell of perfume steals into my first dream, the cool touch of her skin, smooth, without warmth.

This New Left of theirs—

Surreptitiously perfumed—

Seeking warmth—

And then she breaks down. The soldiers are stunned. She is on the verge of tears, but first says something in rapid English, repeating it more slowly, unexpectedly casting about for Hebrew words as well, and at last crying silently, making no sound.

Only now do I become aware of an old signal corpsman in a corner of the tent, bent over a field telephone with someone very distant at the other end trying without much hope to ascertain the dead man's true identity.

Again someone comes for me, leads both of us to a tent at the far end of the camp and offers the rumpled beds of soldiers out on patrol, to sleep in till morning. Then they bring food in mess-tins, and a bottle with some left-over Sabbath wine; lighting a candle on the floor, they leave us to ourselves, my daughter-in-law and me, in the translucent darkness of a single quivering candle, in the close air of the Jordan Valley.

Crazed and exhausted with hunger, I am stupefied by the smell of the food. And thus, seated on the bed, the dishes on the floor at my feet, without looking at her, without strength left to speak English, I stoop and eat like a savage, crouching over the food, with a bent fork and without a knife, sleepily devouring army food that tastes wonderful to me, mingled with the smells and flavors of gunpowder, saltpeter, desert dust, sweat; I set the bottle to my dry lips and gulp down the cheap wine, sweet and tepid and reeking of rifle grease and tank fuel. I get drunk instantly, as though someone were striking at my insides with dull, faraway blows that grow sharper and more intense.

Shots. Human beings shooting at each other again. I wake up, find myself lying on the bed, the helmet that I had grown as accustomed to as a skullcap taken off my head, my shoes removed. The moon is gone, the candle extinguished and the darkness grown deeper. A new wind has started up, gently beating against the tent flaps, bringing a current of cool desert air. Without raising myself, heavy, my face sticky with traces of food like a baby's, I make out her profile; sitting up on the other bed, her long hair in wild confusion about her, a battle jacket over her shoulders, her face open, feet bare, sitting and sucking on a cigarette. Half the night gone and she still awake. Hasn't touched the food. Her head turned toward me, gazing at me in fascination, in wonder, and the dread that propelled her through several barriers last night in order to reach this place deepens, as though by my own power I had killed him, and then brought him back to life, as if my intention had been to indicate to her a possibility. . . .

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The firing continues. Single shots. They seem to have changed direction. But I myself grow more and more accustomed to them. She is not frightened either, does not stir, even though now he might really get killed, somewhere out there, on his half-track slowly grinding down a trail.

X

I MUST still return to that moment when I first learned of his death. Summer morning, the sky cut vertically, June, final days, I rise late, dazed, as after an illness, straight into the sun.

The bells are ringing and I am swept slowly up the stairs in the turmoil of students who suck me upward in their current, into the corridors. I move alongside the open classroom doors, past weary teachers' faces, arrive at my class and find them quiet, aloof, long-haired, their Bibles dropping to the floor. One of them is at the blackboard covering it with flowers, dozens of white crumbling flowers.

I mount the platform and they look up at me. The room is dim, the curtains drawn. And I realize—I am not important to them any longer, I have lost my power over them, they are through with me, I already belong to the past.

How well I know that look; yet I never feared it, for I knew—they would come back in the end. In a few years I would find them around, with their wives or husbands, running after their babies with a faint stoop, and when I would meet them in the street—self-conscious, holding their shopping baskets—I would regain my power over them. If only for an instant, for a split second.

But these last years the parting grows difficult. They are off to the deserts, far away; I mean, this supple flesh, the erect heads, the young eyes. And there are those who do not come back. Several already. A few disappear. And something withers in me. I remain troubled. This pain of theirs, the advantage of an experience in which I have no share. And even those who do come back, though they walk with their children and their shopping baskets, there is something veiled in their eyes, they stare at me blankly, almost ignore me, as though I had deceived them somewhere. I mean, as though I had deceived them with the very subject matter itself. As if everything we taught them—the laws, the proverbs, the prophecies—had all collapsed for them out there, in the dust, the scorching fire, the lonely nights. All of it had failed the test of some other reality. But what other reality? Lord of Hosts, Lord God —*what* other reality for God's sake? Does anything really change? I mean, these imaginary signs of revolution.

I am seized with unquiet, start handing out the test papers, pass between the rows myself and lay them on the desks. And the silence around me deepens. They read, heave a little sigh, then take out clean sheets of paper and start drafting their straightforward, efficient, unimaginative answers in that bald, arid style that may suddenly, unaccountably, take a lyrical turn, only to dry up again and expire in the desert.

They will be the death of me—

And there is my son, returned from the United States, clumsy, long hair, such a gentle professor, no longer so young. Has brought along a campus-girl, a slender student, cloaked in a worn and tasseled garment, and on her shoulders, strapped into a sort of rucksack, a small pale child who speaks only English. They alight from the plane and look at me as though bringing some new tidings, revolutionary, of some other reality, wonderful and as yet unknown. . . .

Suddenly I feel tears springing to my eyes. Still wandering between the desks, past the Bibles on the floor, I stoop and pick one up here and there. The students follow me with their eyes, already longing to chat, or at least whisper a word that they believe might help them, might add another fraction to their grades, even though they are about to abandon it all so soon, leaving empty classrooms behind them, a pile of chairs in a corner, a clean blackboard, traces of their names engraved on their desks as on tombstones.

And all of a sudden I long for a different parting, one that will be engraved on their hearts for all time. In a whirl of emotion I cross to the windows and jerk the curtains aside, spattering my students with heavy splashes of sunlight like drops of blood. I go to the door and open it wide, stand on the threshold, half-turned to the corridor away from the class. And I know the suspense they are in. Am I setting a trap? Am I here or am I not?

And then I see the principal from afar, striding sadly and pensively along the empty corridor. He approaches slowly, heavily, like an old, obsolete tank. Something has aged in him these past few years. In a year or so he too will have to retire. He lifts his head and sees me standing in the doorway, lowers it again as if I were a stone or a spirit. He assumes I do not want to talk to him. As if three years were not enough for us. And in the room the whispering swells, and the swish of papers. They are already exchanging answers with one another. But I do not move. My face is turned to the corridor window, the display of summer, bright and full. The hills of Judea in the distance, the hills of Moab, and all the rest. And the image of the students behind me is reflected in the glass as well, fused with the landscape, on a patch of blue, on the treetops, faraway antennae, the hum of aircraft.

The principal stops beside me. For the first time in three years. Very pale. He must break the silence at once.

Five or six hours ago—
In the Jordan Valley—
Killed on the spot—

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Rewriting History

Walter Laqueur

REVISIONIST historiography is almost as old as history itself, the impulses behind it as varied as the full range of human motivation. History has been rewritten because perspectives have changed or new sources have been discovered, because a younger generation has become bored with the accepted version of things or has felt a strong iconoclastic urge, or even because a need has arisen for a version of the past that can be used to support one side or another in some contemporary political debate. In the past it was not customary to apologize unduly for practicing even the last-named of these historical revisings. Thus, Augustin Thierry in his *Lettres sur l'histoire de France*: "In 1817, preoccupied with a strong desire to contribute to the triumph of constitutional opinions, I began to look into works of history for proofs and arguments which would support my political belief." Few present-day revisionist historians would permit themselves such candor.

History rewritten is by itself neither good nor bad; everything depends on the spirit in which the historical evidence is approached. A lawyer defending the interests of his client selects from the evidence those facts likely to fortify his case and ignores those likely to damage it; the historian, on the other hand, whatever his political predilections and aversions, must not knowingly suppress even the most unpalatable evidence. The main weakness of much—not all—recent revisionist literature is that it prefers the lawyer's approach to that of the historian.

We have witnessed in the years just past an unprecedented upsurge of revisionist writings, some more blatantly utilitarian than others, some more far-reaching in their conclusions than others. The following observations mainly concern some noteworthy revisionist and semi-revisionist writings on the Nazi period, World War II, and the origins of the cold war. Yet any discussion of today's revisionist history and its political impact should deal, however briefly, with its antecedents in the earlier part of the century, and with these we shall begin.

WALTER LAQUEUR, director of the Institute of Contemporary History in London, is the author of, among other works, *Out of the Ruins of Europe, The Rebirth of Europe,* and, most recently, *A History of Zionism.*

I

MODERN historical revisionism first surfaced in Germany after 1918—in reaction to the doctrine, incorporated in Paragraph 231 of the Versailles peace treaty, that Germany bore sole responsibility for World War I. This became a major issue in German domestic politics, provoking tremendous indignation among patriotic German historians who produced countless tracts to demonstrate that on the contrary the outbreak of the war was partly the work of destiny, partly the work of Germany's enemies. A monthly journal (the *Berliner Monatshefte)* was founded to provide a periodical platform for such writings; it was still in circulation on the eve of World War II, when it undertook to demonstrate Germany's innocence once again.

Not until a decade or so ago was the "revisionist" version of the origins of World War I seriously challenged by German historians, and then itself revised. On the basis of much new source material, Professor Fritz Fischer, in *Germany's Aims in the First World War,* proved that Germany had been considerably more willing to entertain the risk of war than was generally assumed, and that annexationist designs had in fact long been nurtured by German leaders. The debate over Fischer's conclusions lasted a number of years, and although not all of his arguments have been accepted, he and his followers have succeeded in bringing about a salutary modification in some of the more patriotic myths cherished since 1918 by many German historians and the general German public. This remains so despite the criticism voiced by some historians outside Germany who rightly maintain that the origins of the war cannot be studied with exclusive reference to a single driving force such as German foreign policy, but must be seen as the outcome of the interaction of many factors.*

Revisionism flourished in the United States as well after World War I, with the focus, naturally, on the role played by America. The opening shot, as far as the historical profession was concerned,

* See, for example, Joachim Remak, "1914—The Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered," in *Journal of Modern History,* September 1971; Paul W. Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie," *ibid.,* September 1972.

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was fired by Sidney Fay in an article in the *American Historical Review* in July 1920, in which he maintained that the Germans had not deliberately plotted war but entered upon it after having mistakenly given the Austrians a free hand with Serbia. Fay's successors widened the argument considerably, undertaking to offset the official Allied version of events on almost every point, and maintaining that American intervention in the war resulted from "the selfish influence of Wall Street bankers, munitions makers, Allied propaganda, Sir Edward Grey's cunning, and so forth."* Although the revisionists were not wholly confined to a leftist viewpoint—Charles Tansill, for example, belonged to the far Right—most were Left-of-Center and all were agreed that American intervention had been contrary to the national interest.

The revisionist reading of America's role in World War I greatly facilitated the spread of isolationism in the United States in the 20's and 30's and subsequently blinded many Americans to the essential differences between the Kaiser and Adolf Hitler. By the time Hitler came to power, the prevailing view among liberals was that on no account should Americans again be sent to fight and die in Europe; that the place to stop totalitarianism was at home; and that the moment Americans took a more active role, civil liberties would be suppressed and the New Deal scrapped. Writing many years later about World War I revisionism and its impact on public opinion, Professor Edward Mead Earle remarked that "A good deal of historical teaching, as well as historical writing, was the direct cause, if not the only cause, of the cynicism and intellectual nihilism which determined the climate of our university campuses for twenty years." In politics, this historical teaching also produced the Nye Committee, the Neutrality Act of 1935, and President Roosevelt's Chautauqua address of 1936 in which it became clear that the President too had learned the "lesson" of World War I. The net effect of all this was a disinclination on the part of the United States to exercise its influence in Europe during the years when it might have been possible to stop aggression without going to war.

II

The revisionist history of World War I followed almost immediately on the heels of the "official" version, both in Europe and in the United States. After World War II, by contrast, the revisionist wave was much slower in gathering momentum; it did not really begin to crest until the late 1960's. The reasons for this are not hard to grasp. In 1914-18 the issues involved were extremely complicated, and the notion that the war had all been Germany's fault was simply too reductive to escape immediate contradiction once the hostilities were over. The origins of World War II, on the other hand, seemed obvious to all concerned, and thus a lengthy interval ensued before an attempt to rewrite the history of those years could be undertaken with any hope of success. (The same applies to the history of the cold war.) This is not to say that *all* the issues in World War II were clear-cut, only that the central issues were, and have remained so. Very little new evidence has come to light concerning the war years, and thus the revisionist version of the period has less to do with the discovery of new sources than with changes that have taken place in the perspective and mood of historians themselves.

Around 1965, a group of New-Left historians in Germany began producing the first literature of consequence dedicated to a revised analysis of the Nazi period by Europeans. (I exempt the works published after 1945 by the extreme Right in West Germany, works which had no impact whatsoever and which there is no compelling reason to disinter.) The central claim of this school is that Nazism, at bottom, was nothing but the agent of finance capitalism and lacked a function or political will of its own apart from the aims of bank directors and captains of industry. The difference between fascism and liberal democracy (according to the revisionists) is not one of principle; in fact the two have the same aim, namely, to preserve capitalist class rule. Both manipulate the masses and both engage in repression, the one openly, by means of terror, the other surreptitiously, by keeping the masses ignorant and passive. The revisionists are naturally impatient with what they consider the excessive preoccupation of liberal-bourgeois-reformist historians with the personality of Hitler and with the crimes committed by the Nazis. These are, after all, the practices *always* adopted by capitalist rulers when pushed to the wall; to speak of particular evil in this context is to introduce a false issue.

The most charitable thing one can say about this theory of fascism is that it leaves a great many questions unresolved, one of them—not necessarily the most important one—being the rationale behind Nazi policy with regard to the Jews. From the revisionist point of view it would have made sense for Hitler to have killed the poor Jews and coopted the rich ones (as Brecht suggested in one of his less successful plays). The fact that Hitler exercised no such discrimination among Jews has led some New-Left writers to create a brand-new set of historical and sociological facts in order to dispose of the apparent contradiction. A reading of recent German literature on the subject gives the impression that most German Jews were right-wing reactionaries (not liberals and socialists, as had been thought in the past); that those who remained in Germany did nothing whatsoever to oppose fascism; and that those who emigrated continued to play a baneful

* Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists*, University of Chicago Press (1967).

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role by infecting the British and American intelligentsia with their counterrevolutionary views. The Jews, in other words, were themselves partly to blame for the fate that befell them.*

The animosity displayed by the New-Left historians to German Jewry may be psychologically understandable, but so absurd and morally suspect are the assumptions on which it is based that one finds oneself wondering why the issue has been made so central to the New-Left argument in the first place. It would have been much wiser simply to dismiss the Nazi obsession with the Jews as a marginal phenomenon, a historical freak-accident. No philosophy of history can explain *every* phenomenon, and by insisting on the reactionary character of German Jewry the revisionists have only compounded their own difficulties: for if German Jews were counterrevolutionary, Hitler's policy toward them becomes harder, not easier, to understand.

The German New-Left approach to Nazism has not gained many converts outside West Germany's universities, and is not likely to. In England and America the "rethinking of Germany" has proceeded more along the lines of the arguments recently propounded by Geoffrey Barraclough in a series of articles in the *New York Review of Books* (October/November 1972). Barraclough eschews the crudities of the German revisionist historians, and in some respects his conclusions are diametrically opposed to theirs. Yet for all the studied moderation of his language, Barraclough too wants to see the dismantling of the myths surrounding the history of Nazism—most of which, he contends, have been perpetrated by liberal historians—and the de-demonization of Nazism and of Hitler. Barraclough desires that historians now give precedence to factors such as the "long-term social dichotomies" within Germany, rather than concentrating on individual personalities. He calls too for new standards of research and measurement.

All of this sounds eminently sensible, but what does de-demonization mean in practice? We get a taste when Barraclough berates the late Hajo Holborn for calling Goebbels an "offensive guttersnipe." He was, after all, says Barraclough, "a graduate of Heidelberg University, and German universities in 1921 were not renowned for opening their doors to guttersnipes." Now, "guttersnipe" may not be the most fitting characterization of the late Reich minister for propaganda, but Barraclough's rejoinder is surely a worse lapse than Holborn's: a gangster remains a gangster even if he acquires an academic degree. There were in fact not a few such types in the higher ranks of the SS, one of them even a professor. The fact that he was a graduate of Kiel University was not considered a mitigating circumstance by the postwar tribunal that sentenced Dr. Ohlendorf to death for having commanded an *Einsatzgruppe* responsible for killing about a million Jews. This may seem a small point, but it is revealing of Barraclough's general approach. The historian Leopold von Ranke (Lord Acton once wrote) spoke of transactions and occurrences where it would have been safe to speak of turpitude and crime; Barraclough, who is not a liberal historian, is clearly a partisan of this method.

BARRACLOUGH believes that there has been a surfeit of German history of the wrong sort—the sort which reflects an unending fascination with the horrors of the Hitler dictatorship. This is true up to a point, although one would still like to see, for instance, a definitive history of the Nazi party and a history of Nazi economic policy, as well as some other fundamental studies which do not yet exist. In line with the kind of social historiography he prefers, Barraclough devotes a large portion of his essays to questions of periodization, in an attempt to support the proposition that the whole of German history between 1879 and 1969 should be seen as a single unit. In this wider context, Nazism then becomes the German equivalent of the French Revolution of 1789: the ultimate revolt against the old, authoritarian, semi-feudal society of Germany. Hitler in this scheme emerges as a modernizer, the man who provided the German people with a significant measure of upward mobility. This is "an unpalatable fact for liberals to swallow."

It is possible, says Barraclough, that the "social revolution the Nazis set in motion will appear as the most enduring, perhaps the only enduring legacy of the Third Reich." He quotes with approval Richard Gruenberger's observation that Hitler dragged Germany "kicking and screaming into the century of the common man." This was also one of the favorite images of the late Isaac Deutscher in writing about Stalin, and if it is of doubtful descriptive value when applied to the Soviet Union, it is more than doubtful when applied to Germany. A dictator who manages to kill a sufficient number of people in purges, in concentration camps, or in war, does indeed provide mobility—upward, downward, and sideward. With equal logic it could be argued that Jack the Ripper made a positive contribution to the reduction of venereal disease in London's East End, or that a few strategically placed nuclear bombs would alleviate the problem of global overpopulation. With even greater justice it could be claimed that the East-German Communists owe the existence of their state to the Nazis, and that but for Hitler, Austria would not have a Socialist government now. And had it not been for Nazi policy toward the Jews, had it not been for the Holocaust, a Jewish state would, in all

* Giving evidence before a Berlin court, Miss Ulrike Meinhof recently declared that one of the worst mistakes made by the German Left after the war was to regard Auschwitz as a manifestation of evil, and not to understand that anti-Semitism was essentially an anti-capitalist phenomenon.

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probability, not have come into existence in our time. One isn't quite sure what conclusions to draw from these facts.

That totalitarian regimes can effect far-reaching social change is not, of course, a new discovery. The late Franz Borkenau wrote of the Nazi regime in 1939 that "some sections of the upper classes are directly destroyed by the regime. . . . This class [the old Prussian landowners] has been crowded out from almost all administrative and very many army jobs. . . . There could be no more thoroughgoing social revolution" (*The Totalitarian Enemy*). Borkenau himself overdramatized the suddenness of this revolution, which had, after all, begun in 1918; the fact that the Junker experienced something like a minor revival between 1930 and 1933 should not blind us to the fact that their political power had largely been broken by then. The real question remains whether Germany would have become a modern nation *without* Hitler, and the answer to this seems obvious—unless one happens to believe that alone among all Western nations the Germans would simply have stood still.

Barraclough's call for a new approach to recent German history is aimed at taking account of the Germany of people concerned "with jobs and wages, with the eight-hour day and equal opportunities for their children." In social history he seems to find the key to understanding the Nazi phenomenon and modern German history in general. Hence his insistence on a new kind of periodization, for the turning points of social history are not those of political history: the history of Weimar culture, for example, starts not in 1918 but around 1905. This much is self-evident, and, so far as it goes, unexceptionable. But the truth is that a history concerned only with jobs and wages and the eight-hour day will not shed much light on anything but jobs and wages and the eight-hour day. Thus, for example, a comparative study of living conditions in wartime Germany and England would no doubt show that in both countries the trains left more or less on time, dentists continued to practice dentistry, food was rationed, children went to school, there were no strikes, tomatoes and potatoes were grown, the theater and the cinema continued to function, and people worked overtime. A diligent student of social conditions would probably discover important differences in drinking habits between the two countries, as well as other significant divergences, but the similarities would be more pronounced than the differences. An investigation of this kind could not possibly provide a clue as to why Nazism should have prevailed in Germany but not in Britain, or why the two countries should have been at war.

IT IS all very well to decry the excessive preoccupation of historians with personalities ("one of the blemishes of liberal historiography"), as Barraclough does. He is clearly bored with Hitler, and he is not alone in this. But it is still true that the Nazi party was totally dominated by Hitler and received its impetus from him. Without Hitler the Nazis would probably not have come to power; in power, they would have pursued a markedly different policy in some respects, and it is doubtful whether they would have deliberately started a second world war: Goering or Hess would have been far more likely to strike a compromise with Chamberlain and Daladier. To put it crudely, if the bullet which hit Scheubner Richter during the march on the Feldherrnhalle in November 1923 had traveled a few inches in another direction, German, and, indeed, world history would in all probability have followed a different course in the last forty years.

Like it or not, there have been certain individuals who have decisively changed the course of history—quite irrespective of jobs and wages, of the eight-hour day, of railway timetables. Hitler, unfortunately, was one such man; Lenin was another. Even official Soviet historians admit that without Lenin the Bolsheviks would not have been able to seize power in November 1917. In a perspective of fifty years it might of course be argued that neither Lenin nor the Bolsheviks made that great a difference, since even without them Russia today would be more or less the same sort of state: the world's second most powerful military and economic power, culturally and politically perhaps a little freer (something on the order of Franco's Spain or Greece under the colonels). But if we are to accept this as our standard of judgment, we would have to acknowledge that Hitler affected the course of German history even more decisively than Lenin affected that of Russia. For Lenin preserved Russia's unity while Hitler caused Germany's division. To admit the role of accident and personality is not necessarily to subscribe to the liberal or the national or the national-liberal approach to history (all equally deplored by Barraclough); nor does it imply a belittlement of social history. It simply means to accept the obvious.

Who are the protagonists of the new approach to German history invoked by Barraclough? Three names are mentioned in particular: Fritz Stern, Martin Broszat, and David Childs. The first two are well-known students of contemporary Germany, in whose writings it would be difficult, however, to find much in support for Barraclough's general position. Broszat, for instance, is not among those who play down Hitler's importance in the history of Nazism and the Third Reich, and Stern would most likely disagree with Barraclough's contention that the search for the intellectual origins of the Third Reich has been overdone. (As Stern noted in *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, "A thousand teachers in republican Germany who in their youth had worshipped Lagarde or Langbehn [leading 19th-century racialist thinkers] were just as important

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in the triumph of National Socialism as all the putative millions of marks that Hitler collected from the German tycoons.") As for David Childs, a young British political scientist, Barraclough's repeated references to him seem altogether mysterious. Childs's main interest is Germany *after* 1945, and his main contributions have been in political analysis and (incorrect) political prediction, not in social history.

Barraclough sets himself resolutely against "the sweeping moral judgments in which old-fashioned historians delight"—an admirable, if somewhat supererogatory, attitude. The late Pieter Geyl, in the heat of polemic, charged with some accuracy that the dominant factor in Barraclough's view of the world is power. In this Barraclough inevitably reminds one of the historian E. H. Carr, who has expressed the view that, as there is no reality outside the historical process, condemnation of the past on ethical grounds is a meaningless exercise. It is not the duty of the historian to judge harshly the massacres committed by or in the name of Charlemagne or Napoleon, or Hitler or Stalin; the latter pair are too close to us in time for judgment, the former too remote. Polemicizing against Arnold Toynbee and Churchill, Carr once contended (with reference to the Nazis) that ours has not been an exceptionally wicked age; even Hitler's demands for *Lebensraum* were merely an authentic echo of the Marxist denial of a community of interest between the haves and the have-nots. The historian, in Carr's view, should confine himself to evaluative terms of a comparative nature like "progressive" and "reactionary," rather than uncompromising absolutes like "good" and "bad."

With this approach Barraclough is bound to be in sympathy. He himself, and like-minded historians of the older generation, will almost certainly restrict themselves to general statements on recent German history, but more daring spirits among the new revisionists may go further. Once moral judgments have been dismissed and once the view has been accepted that humanitarian considerations count for nothing when vital issues in the history of great nations are concerned, all kinds of inhuman actions may come to seem justified. And if we are to express ourselves in comparative terms like "progressive" and "reactionary," we may have to suspend judgment for a long time. It would be difficult, for instance, to find fault with the politics of a Hitler (or a future Hitler) except on the grounds that he was, or will be, unsuccessful. If the Nazis were in some ways agents of social progress, the same could surely be said of Mussolini, without whom the Italian car industry would not be what it is today. Perhaps Franco will be remembered for transforming Spain into the world's fourth largest shipbuilder. Perhaps the struggle against tyranny has been premature throughout most of history. If so, prudence rather than courage should be our watchword with regard to the coming Caesars.

III

WHATEVER our interpretation of Nazism, participation in the war against Hitler "remains almost wholly sacrosanct, nearly in the realm of theology," says Bruce M. Russett in *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of United States Entry into World War II.** Most isolationist American historians of World War I also opposed entrance into World War II, but after 1945 they faded from the scene. This situation has now been remedied, and I for one have no doubt that the theme taken up by Russett will be re-echoed in many variations in the near future. Russett is a political scientist of the behaviorist persuasion, but his book is mercifully free of professional mumbo-jumbo—with the exception of a sudden digression toward the end about "the power of macroscopic prediction" (on voting behavior in the UN), which is about as relevant to the topic as a treatise on butterflies in Baluchistan, though probably less scientifically valid.

Russett says that American participation in World War II brought the country few gains and that at the end the United States was no more secure than if it had stayed out. The war in Europe, he believes, would probably have closed in a draw, or else would have continued on for a decade or so. The Germans would have ended up ruling Western and Central Europe, an empire of up to 330 million inhabitants, while in the East the truce line might well have come to approximate the present border of the Soviet Union. Perhaps the Russians would have fared a little better, and the Germans a little worse, but this is not really a matter of great importance, for as between the horrors of Stalinist Russia and those of Nazi Germany Russett finds it very difficult to choose. The Jews, along with many others, would have gone to their deaths anyway —there was nothing the Allies could do about it. Britain on the other hand would almost certainly have survived.

Some of Russett's arguments err on the side of understatement: "Stalemate under Nazi occupation would have meant [for Western Europe] social transformations that might have doomed for many years the culture of parliamentary democracy." Others are anachronistic—as when, for instance, Gibbon is invoked to prove that the Germans would have found it difficult if not impossible to control their empire: "There is nothing more contrary to nature than the attempt to hold in obedience distant provinces." Surely Russett must know that horses are no longer the only means of transportation and communication in Europe. The author is on safer ground when he argues that a stalemate in Europe would not have marked the end of Hitler's ambitions; nevertheless, he believes that for some time at

* Harper Torchbooks, 320 pp., $1.95.

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least Germany would not have offered an immediate threat to the United States, and American intervention would have remained possible if a German victory over Britain and Russia seemed imminent. (I am skipping Russett's scenario for the Pacific.)

In retrospect, Russett advocates American rearmament (with 10 per cent of the GNP devoted to military purposes) and assistance to Britain and perhaps also to Russia, but a careful avoidance of belligerency. He concludes that the cost of American participation was too high, not only in the numbers killed and in the exhaustion of irreplaceable natural resources but also politically, in the diversion of attention from domestic reform: "The feeling of need for constant vigilance against threats, domestic as well as foreign, represents a political cost . . . the effect of heavy military spending is to shift the nation's political center of gravity to the Right."

WHAT is one to make of all this? We are dealing here with might-have-beens that are by definition irrefutable. It may well be true that there was no clear and present danger to American national security in 1940. But Russett's scenarios cover a much longer period, several decades in effect. By 1945 nuclear bombs and missiles had become available, and a few years later, with—in Russett's picture—a Europe divided between Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, America would no longer have been invulnerable, unless one assumes that both the Soviet and Nazi economies would have been utterly destroyed and incapable of recovery for many years. The prospect of a Nazi Germany with nuclear bombs at its disposal is not a pretty one; Russett's assertion in this connection that modern warfare offers few examples of one state's achieving military advantage over another by means of a new weapon does not quite reassure. There *have* been such instances of decisive military advantage, and anyway the case of the atomic bomb is *sui generis*: the first misjudgment might have been the last.

Moral considerations, says the author, demand a re-examination of our myths about World War II. Yet in the end he admits that on moral grounds alone a perfectly valid case could be made for American intervention. Only by disregarding morality does the isolationist argument retain a certain plausibility, and then only if its premises are accepted. The trouble is that the premises ignore history, and for this reason they are unrealistic. The earliest date mentioned in Russett's book is August 1939, the date of the Nazi-Soviet pact; what happened before is somehow regarded as immaterial. Such an arbitrary cut of the seamless web of history for the purpose of a retrospective game of war and peace is quite indefensible. Any meaningful discussion of World War II must begin well before August 1939. Those who think that the war could have been prevented may well be right, but paradoxically, as I remarked earlier, the all-pervasive climate of isolationism in the United States was one of the reasons it wasn't. Even Roosevelt, the "warmonger," felt (as he wrote the American diplomat William Phillips in September 1938) that the U.S. could do nothing but wait for "Europe to blow itself up and then have America pick up the pieces of European civilization and help them to save what remains of the wreck." As Arnold A. Offner has recently pointed out in his study of American-German relations, a bolder American policy might not only have encouraged others to greater daring and resistance but would also have had a dampening effect on Hitler's designs.* But "from Roosevelt, through Hull and Welles, and down through the ranks of the State Department, in the Congress, and in all walks of life, with too few exceptions, there persisted a belief that Europe's problems were Europe's, that an ocean three thousand miles wide separated the New World from the Old. . . . When the great crises came, Americans, as Chamberlain had said of his countrymen, regarded them as being in a faraway country between people they did not know."

Russett's investigation of U.S. entry into World War II was triggered, as he says, by Vietnam and more generally by the cold-war policies of the American government which led to Vietnam. If Vietnam was unnecessary or wrong, if our concepts of the cold war have been based on a myth, then the whole "row of intellectual dominoes" seems bound to fall. This statement should not come as a surprise. Intellectually, revisionist writings may not offer a serious challenge to traditional historiography, but they obviously answer a widespread need for a satisfying explanation of recent events on the basis of a comprehensive theory of American foreign policy in the last generation. Russett's book is unusual only in that it takes the argument back to World War II, which is still generally considered a "just" conflict. Most American revisionists have confined their reconsiderations of American policy to the postwar period, and have dated the decline of American virtue to 1945 or thereabouts.

IV

ONLY if historians were to settle permanently in ivory towers could they escape being influenced by current events, or would revisionism cease to be a factor in the study of history. The events of 1848 and 1870-71 had a profound impact on the writing of the history of the French Revolution. The experience of Nazism, Fascism, and World War II not only affected our views of Bismarck, but brought about a reassessment of such seemingly distant

* *American Appeasement, United States Foreign Policy, and Germany, 1933-38*, Harvard University Press (1969).

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topics as the Augustan Age and the American Civil War. Similarly, "the breakdown of liberalism and the disastrous war in Vietnam have compelled many Americans to re-examine the cold war," says a recent student of the period, who has also drawn attention to the fact that those who dissented from the cold-war "consensus" in the late 1940's and early 1950's were denounced and ignored for their views and have only in recent years gained respectability.* This too is not exactly a new phenomenon.

In retrospect it appears quite clear that after 1965 a new shrillness and passion entered the debate over the origins of the cold war, and year by year the shrillness and passion have grown. Thus, in *Atomic Diplomacy,* published in 1965, Gar Alperowitz still found it possible to credit leading American statesmen with subjectively good motives, "the best of intentions," and a measure of "idealism." A few years later such an appraisal would have been almost unthinkable. Again in 1965, David Horowitz noted that America, however imperialistic and anti-revolutionary at present, had at one time fostered liberty, equality, and self-determination. A few years later another revisionist writer noted with satisfaction that Mr. Horowitz had since considerably changed his position; obviously it had been childish to assume that America had ever been anything but counterrevolutionary.†

The rewriting of the origins and history of the cold war was provoked by the American crisis of the late 1950's and for this reason it has remained an exclusive American phenomenon; in Europe there is nothing even vaguely approximating it, nor has the American literature on the subject evoked much interest. There are those in Europe, to be sure, who have maintained all along that Russia was (and is) right and America wrong. Vietnam, however, which marked a watershed in the thinking of American historians, had but a limited impact in Europe, and was not in itself capable of provoking a reconsideration of the history of the cold war. There may be other reasons as well. Europe, after all, was the main scene of the cold war, and most Europeans experienced it at first hand; they are hence more likely to trust their own recollections than the work of historians from Nashville, Tennessee, or Madison, Wisconsin.

The cold-war revisionists do not constitute a monolithic bloc, although there are identifiable groupings among them. Alperowitz, Lloyd Gardner, and Walter LaFeber all studied at the University of Wisconsin at about the same time and were all influenced by William Appleman Williams, one of revisionism's founding fathers, but there are considerable differences among these three and between each of them and their common teacher, and taken altogether the four constitute only a small unit in the revisionist army. A few examples will suffice to show to what extent revisionists disagree with each other.

Gabriel Kolko, in *The Politics of War* (1968), maintains that Yalta represented a victory for the British and Americans, "who alone obtained concessions" as far as Germany was concerned, but Diana Shaver Clemens, another revisionist who has devoted a whole book to the subject, *Yalta* (1970), says that such an assertion is nonsense; there was, she maintains, no consistent anti-Soviet stance on the part of the Western powers; on the contrary, Roosevelt sided with the Soviet Union against Britain. Similarly, revisionist historians do not see eye to eye on the question of how (and when) the cold war started. The first generation of revisionists maintained that the cold war broke out, in effect, because good President Roosevelt died and was succeeded by wicked President Truman who talked harshly to the unfortunate Molotov on April 23, 1945. The second generation, more sophisticated, has pointed to the ambivalence of Roosevelt's own policies and to the fact that after 1944 reality no longer conformed to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Every revisionist historian has his favorite date for the beginning of the cold war. For many, Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech on March 5, 1946 represents the decisive moment. Walter LaFeber, however, takes note of a speech by Stalin four weeks earlier that was a "declaration of war" of sorts, to which Churchill merely "delivered the Western reply." ** Fred Warner Neal finds no signs of a clear Soviet "cold-war attitude" before September 1946, when the British and Americans challenged Soviet policies in Bulgaria.†† The late Isaac Deutscher, finally, asserted that up until the formation of NATO, Stalin was "still very cautious" because he did not want to antagonize bourgeois opinion in the West.

Did the Soviet Union ever pose a military threat to the West? The present-day view is that it did not. To cite Isaac Deutscher again: "Of course, Russia could not—even if we were to argue on the most cynical grounds, even if we assumed that she had most wicked rulers—Russia could not threaten anyone. . . ." This is Deutscher writing in the 60's.*** At the height of the cold war he had actually had something different to say, contending that "a Russian Bonaparte cast his shadow ahead between January and March 1953"; "if the internal tensions in the USSR were to grow acute, he would seek to relieve them by military ad-

* Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration,* Quadrangle (1970).

† David Horowitz, *From Yalta to Vietnam.* The comment on Horowitz was made by Gareth Stedman Jones in 1972.

** *America, Russia, and the Cold War,* Wiley (1972).

†† In Neal Houghton, ed., *Struggle against History: U.S. Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolution,* Simon & Schuster (1968).

*** In David Horowitz, ed., *Containment and Revolution,* Beacon (1968), pp. 14-15.

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ventures abroad, to place Europe and Asia at Russia's feet. . . . [This] may see the end of all self-containment, for the Bonaparte would dispute the party secretaries and make straight for the English Channel."* Fred Warner Neal (writing in 1968) would have sent Deutscher to a psychiatrist for holding this view: "the obsession that the Soviets were plotting physical, military aggression may seem really to be a problem for a psychiatrist."†

Was the cold war mainly ideological in character or were political, military, and/or economic motives of paramount importance? On this issue we have perhaps the widest selection of opinions of all. Many revisionists believe that America's cardinal mistake was the turning of a straightforward great-power contest with strictly defined rules into a moralistic conflict which soon assumed a global character. Others have argued that ideology did not dictate the way in which the U.S. used its power; the main thrust was economic, the urge to conquer new markets. This is, broadly speaking, the view of Gabriel Kolko, though in his opinion the need to stem the revolutionary tide in Europe was of equal, if not greater, importance. But this raises yet another question: what were Soviet intentions? Here, unfortunately, we get only vagueness. Most revisionist historians are far more interested in American than in Soviet policies, and in any case, they are not, as a rule, qualified to deal with the subject. An extreme view has recently been voiced by Charles Yost, a career diplomat and for several years the U.S. chief representative to the United Nations. Stalin, Mr. Yost says, "actually never believed in Marxism or Communism, but simply used them as he would have used Catholicism, Islam, Fascism, or the military-industrial complex, had he been born in another country."** In this radical form, the end-of-ideology approach has not gained many converts, but a great many revisionists do seem to agree that Stalin's foreign policy was essentially conservative.

To what extent was the cold war America's fault? Again, there are many diverging interpretations, ranging from an assumption of total guilt ("Nazis are running our government, so why should Russia make peace with them?"—Senator Glenn Taylor in September 1948) to the cautious conclusion of Lloyd Gardner (among others) that the U.S. at the end of the war had many more opportunities than the Soviet Union to exert influence on the course of events, and for this reason responsibility for the *way* in which the cold war developed belongs more with the U.S. than with the Russians. The Kolko school, on the other hand, holds that to raise the question is already to have subscribed to a liberal fallacy; the conflict was not accidental but was rather the inevitable consequence of American capitalism and imperialism. The cold war was the fault of the system, not of individual politicians or policies.

Lastly, could the cold war have been prevented? The early revisionists were firmly convinced that the cold war would not have developed as it did if American policymakers had behaved in good faith and had recognized that they had no business meddling in East European affairs. The second-generation revisionists are on the whole in agreement with this. The cold war was not foreordained or inexorable, says Thomas G. Paterson, although he adds as an afterthought that "we cannot be certain that the alternatives were viable and would have made a difference in international relations."†† Lloyd Gardner takes the same line, listing specific ways in which American policy toward the Soviet Union could have been handled differently. Expectably, Kolko and David Horowitz assert that the cold war was inevitable. For Kolko, the wartime coalition against the Axis had only a single common objective, the defeat of the Nazis; once the war was over the alliance was bound to disintegrate and give way to open conflict, in view of the counterrevolutionary character of the Western allies.

A DETAILED study of the revisionist writers will no doubt one day be undertaken, and it will provide both insight and entertainment. The present brief summary has nevertheless been sufficient to establish that revisionist historians dispute one another on many points of detail, but almost without exception they all agree that what happened between 1945 and 1950 was to a large extent the fault of America, either because of what it did or because of what it stood for (imperialism). Given this conclusion, it cannot seem a coincidence that in their historical writings the revisionists devote themselves almost exclusively to United States policy, or that the sources they draw on are preponderantly American. About Europe, about Russia, about other parts of the world they know little and often seem not to care. It is as if one were to undertake to report on and analyze a ball game on the basis of the plays made by one side only. This applies to the older and younger revisionists alike, and it constitutes the single greatest deficiency of their work, vitiating much of its claim to be taken seriously as political analysis. In an otherwise highly laudatory essay on I. F. Stone, for example, Norman Kanter concludes with regret that on the question of aggression in the Korean war, "admittedly Stone did not submit Communist conduct to anything approaching his rigorous scrutiny of American policy."*** D. F. Fleming's two massive volumes on the cold war,

* *Russia after Stalin,* Bobbs-Merrill (1969).

† In Neal Houghton, ed., *op. cit.*

** *The Conduct and Misconduct of Foreign Affairs,* Random House, 234 pp., $7.95.

†† Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years,* Quadrangle (1971).

*** In Paterson, ed., *op. cit.*

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in his own words, were "to a large degree a mirror of the thinking of our ablest newsmen."* With due respect to Mr. Fleming's sources—the Nashville *Banner* and the Nashville *Tennessean,* Drew Pearson, and even the New York *Times*—one may question whether our "ablest newsmen" are sufficient for the analysis of international relations. William Appleman Williams commands respect as a writer on American history whether one agrees with him or not, but once he ventures outside this field, as in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy,*† the result is often embarrassing, if not laughable. Walter Lippmann regarded Wendell Willkie's *One World* and Joseph Davis's *Mission to Moscow* as the two finest analyses of the Soviet Union available anywhere; commenting on domestic affairs, Lippmann would not have displayed such lack of judgment.

More so than other American revisionists, Gabriel Kolko deals as well with events in Europe and the Far East, and his two large volumes are essential reading in any assessment of the quality of recent revisionist historiography.** Where most other authors describe the cold war as a contest between Russia and America, in *The Politics of War* Kolko introduces a third factor, "the Left," which stands sometimes for the Communist party, sometimes for all left-wing forces, sometimes for the spontaneous, radical activities of the working class irrespective of party affiliation. But characteristically for Kolko the word functions more as a symbol than as a descriptive term, a stand-in for the Left that should have existed and acted in a certain way—but didn't. About the real European Left Mr. Kolko's ideas are somewhat hazy, and time and again he commits the most elementary errors in trying to explain or make sense of the intricacies of European socialism.†† He writes with great assurance, for example, about the revolutionary situation that allegedly existed in Poland (and in Eastern Europe) at the end of the war: the masses, he writes, though "not always Communist," nevertheless wanted radical change and were dead set against the foreign policy of the pre-war centrist parties (he means the Left-of-Center peasant parties) which had been anti-Soviet. Nevertheless, the Soviets did not intervene in East European affairs except where the "intractable representatives of the pre-war system left no options."

Anyone with even the slightest familiarity with the real situation in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1950 will be puzzled by this account. However much the peasants of Eastern Europe may have wanted land, there was never any real opposition to the Center parties. If free elections had been held anywhere in Eastern Europe (with the exception of Czechoslovakia) the Communists would have gained no more than 5-10 per cent of the vote. The Russians knew this, and on occasion even admitted it; for this reason dictatorships had to be established in Eastern Europe and maintained to this day. So commonplace a truth is this that one wonders whether Kolko's version of events—a revolutionary upsurge of the masses, a Soviet intervention undertaken only with the greatest reluctance—is meant seriously. But the only humor in these books is of the involuntary kind.

About Western Europe, Kolko's basic theme is briefly this: the United Front strategy adopted by the Communists during the war years inhibited decisive action by local leftists and gave the old order a breathing spell after the war in which to regroup and reassert itself. "The very hesitancy of the Western European Left to act until success appeared imminent led to their undoing." For when success became within reach it was too late; any attempt at a Communist coup would have been suppressed by the British and Americans. (The question is left open as to whether "the Left" should have tried to seize power while the German armies were still around.) As in Eastern Europe, however, the real situation in Western Europe was rather different from Kolko's scenario. The Left as a major military factor did not exist. It is true that Communist influence in the Resistance was considerable, and that "the masses" did want a large measure of social change after the war. But the Communists were able to attract a following precisely because their policy after June 1941 was basically patriotic; a bid for power with the aim of establishing a "Soviet" France or Italy would never have gained support. The European Communist parties were of course aware of this fact, and refrained from sectarian tactics which would have isolated them from the masses. For this "reformist" approach they are sternly taken to task by the author: "Although the Communist party still paid lip service to the writings of Stalin and Lenin, ideology apart it was in fact the party of the constituted order."

The simple fact, which Kolko finds impossible to accept, is that Western Europe in 1945 bore no resemblance to pre-1917 Russia. In most West

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* *The Cold War and Its Origins,* Doubleday (1961).

† Dell (1968; revised edition, 1972).

** *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945,* Random House (1968); *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954,* written with Joyce Kolko, Harper & Row, 820 pp., $15.00.

†† A few examples should suffice. Rosa Luxemburg is described as a Polish nationalist of sorts, which is about as apposite as calling Kolko an admirer of General Thieu. "The West German economy in 1949 was sinking ever deeper into economic stagnation"; in actual fact industrial production rose by 25 per cent. "Washington [in the June 1953 revolt] was one of the gravediggers of the East German workers' objectives and dreams"; "Western Europe's rearmament was economically motivated"; "during much of the 1920's the Soviets had been friendly to left-wing Zionism"—statements like these reveal a great ignorance of the subjects under discussion. And what is one to make of "Clement Grotewohl," the East German leader? Perhaps Kolko means "Otto Attlee" of British Labour fame; it all seems the same to him.

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European countries there was a fairly strong democratic tradition. The majority, most socialists among them, perceived that the essential issue at stake was a confrontation between democracy and dictatorship, and since they had just recently experienced a great deal of dictatorship, they did not want more of it. They believed that by itself the nationalization of the means of production would not necessarily signify a change for the better in the social order, especially if the working class ended up with as much of a say as in Stalin's Russia. In Kolko's view the European Left was misguided in its policy, but one is entitled to wonder. Soon after the end of the war the alliance between Socialists and Communists broke up. Why were the Communists so unsuccessful in their attempt to maintain working-class unity? Why did a radical Left leader like Aneurin Bevan proclaim at the time: "The Communist party is the sworn, inveterate enemy of the Socialist and Democratic parties. When it associates with them, it does so as a preliminary to destroying them"? Was Bevan, too, an agent of American imperialism? Kolko offers no answers to these questions, nor does he tell us what the "correct approach" of European socialists should have been. During the war most of these misguided people opted for Churchill and de Gaulle against Stalin, despite the fact that the former were "class enemies." They did so on the assumption that under Churchill and de Gaulle they might survive to fight another battle, whereas under Stalin the chances of survival were not brilliant. This may have been shortsighted of them, for there was, theoretically, a third position—to refuse to compromise with either Stalin or the Western imperialists, but instead to revolutionize the masses (including the Communist parties) and take a militant, independent line. This would no doubt have been the "correct approach"—or so it might seem from a distance of 4,000 miles, which is the point of view from which *The Politics of War* is written.

Kolko's second volume, written in collaboration with his wife, opens with a restatement of his thesis that America is the relentless champion of reaction all over the globe and that its main concern after the end of World War II was to restore capitalism and to suppress the radicalized working classes of Europe. He does not, however, bother to explain why, if this is so, the only places where native left-wing militancy actually succeeded (or almost succeeded) were Greece, Yugoslavia, and Albania, none of them exactly bulwarks of capitalism, and all of them countries where the revolutionary elements were not industrial workers. Nor does he explain why, if the danger to American imperialism was so great in the postwar years, the U.S. demobilized so rapidly and reduced its military budget so drastically right after the war. Actually—to be fair to the complexity of his view—Kolko claims that America's military machine was not reduced at all but greatly expanded, rationalized, and modernized between 1945 and 1950, in line with the U.S. desire for an overwhelming military superiority in the world. In order to achieve this end without men and money, Kolko writes, the Department of Defense resorted to ingenious statistical calculations designed to mask its real intention and to give the impression that America was a peace-loving nation.

The attribution of malignant motives extends to every aspect of American foreign policy in the postwar years. The Marshall Plan, we learn, was not an expression of generosity at all, since "American capitalism could only turn outward." Soviet policy, on the other hand, is given the benefit of the doubt. Kolko seems to believe that the Russians meant what they said when they told the East European nations that their "internal government was their own concern." And so on. On the other side, there is nothing in this huge book about Communist purges and salami tactics, not a word about Rajk or Traicho or the Slansky trial. In the end, the overall effect of this relentless performance is counterproductive. The reader is bound to reach the conclusion that so much crime and folly on the part of one nation is simply superhuman, without precedent in history. Surely those who shaped American policy during these years must have committed *one* single act that was not discreditable, even in a fit of absentmindedness. Kolko's answer is no, but in revisionist historiography too there is such a thing as overkill.

V

THE works of the more extreme laborers in the vineyards of revisionism fall prey, in a highly organized, rationalistic way, to a kind of basic irrationality, characterized above all by the conviction of an unfolding struggle between the forces of darkness and light. At one time or another throughout modern political history this conviction has plagued both the extreme Right and the extreme Left. Thus the European Right, from 1848 on, and especially after the Paris Commune, was crippled by an all-pervasive fear of social revolution that lasted well into the 20th century and whose effects are to a degree still evident today. The best that can be said about the extreme revisionists is that they do to this fear what Marx did to Hegel: they stand it on its head, attributing to "capitalism" and to "counterrevolution" the same demonic qualities which a previous generation had attributed to the "revolution." At times of crisis, after a revolution or a war, human beings seem to be most vulnerable to irrationality of this kind.

Revisionist historiography, rather than being an attempt to overcome the idiosyncrasies and mistaken conceptions of the cold war, is thus itself more often than not both a product and a symptom of the mentality it purports to decry. Some revisionist writings offer an exact, mirror-

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image of the sort of thing one used to find in works produced at the height of the cold war, works that gave voice to the excitement (sometimes the over-excitement) and the fears (sometimes groundless), of eyewitnessees, men and women who had lived through a period in which detachment was at a premium. This literature, at least in its less thoughtful examples, contained a good deal of inanity, misjudgment, and even hysteria, and its value was considerably reduced thereby. But there were extenuating circumstances at the time which cannot be claimed by the latter-day revisionists who have the benefit of hindsight but have misused it. Their histories have not been written in the heat of battle but in cold blood, and they have to be judged accordingly.

Radical revisionism is nevertheless of value insofar as it conveys certain negative lessons. Perhaps chief among these is the necessity to resist the temptation of the *hysteron-proteron*, blaming politicians for not being aware of developments which took place only subsequently. Thus, revisionist historians have upbraided postwar Western statesmen and political analysts for having assumed in 1947 that the Soviet bloc and the Communist parties throughout the world constituted a more or less monolithic whole. Today, every high-school student knows about the secession of Yugoslavia, the split with China, the different paths taken by Albania and Rumania. In point of fact many informed analysts took it for granted even in the early 50's that a Sino-Soviet split would eventually occur and that it would have momentous consequences, but they assumed, rightly, that years would pass before the conflict between the two countries reached its climax. At the time there *was* a Communist bloc; indeed, it was paradoxically Stalin's effort to impose strict discipline, to control the entire movement from Moscow, that helped bring about its partial disintegration.

Much emphasis has been placed by the revisionists on Soviet weakness immediately after the war. It is true that Russia was weak, but Europe was even weaker, and there were not all that many American troops in Europe in 1947-48 as protection. Was it an altogether fanciful argument that but for a European-American defense pact the Soviet Union might attempt to fill the power vacuum which had come into existence? This, of course, raises the general question of Soviet intentions after 1945, on which, as I have noted, revisionists are divided, as well as the question of how America regarded its postwar role in Europe, on which they are not. According to the revisionists it was Washington's cardinal error to regard the conflict with Communism as a "worldwide ideological clash," and many of them have recommended in retrospect and for the future that the conflict be shorn of its ideological dimension. Yet Soviet spokesmen, including most recently Mr. Brezhnev, have argued to the contrary that foreign policy is by definition based on ideological considerations and that as time goes on the ideological struggle with the West is bound to become more, not less, intense. Mr. Brezhnev may, of course, be wrong, or he may not believe what he says. But at least he deserves a hearing.

During the postwar years a state-of-siege psychology prevailed in the Soviet Union. The revisionists claim that this merely represented Soviet reaction to the policies of Truman, Dulles, and McCarthy, and that a more forthcoming Western policy would have helped put the Russians at ease. The latter may be so, but it is disingenuous to ignore the likelihood that the state-of-siege psychology that characterized Soviet attitudes toward the West was equally a function of domestic needs; virtually nothing the West could have done by way of concessions, loans, or security guarantees would have satisfied those needs. Revisionist historians have stressed the impact of domestic factors on American foreign policy; why should they not recognize the phenomenon when it occurs elsewhere as well?

IT MAY be that little, if anything, can be learned from the so-called lessons of history, but from historians and political commentators we may learn a great deal. The basic weakness of revisionist history has been its concentration of energy on the investigation of American policies, actions, and motives alone. This may result in all kinds of interesting revelations but it cannot possibly lead to any definite conclusions. For let us even assume the impossible—that the revisionist critique is correct on every single count—or let us assume on the contrary that American policymakers had acted in the years since World War II not as they in fact acted but with all the wisdom of gods, all the restraint of angels, and all the benefits of hindsight. Would the postwar crisis have taken an essentially different form? Probably not; the question, at any rate, is unanswerable without reference to events in Europe, in the Soviet world, even in Asia. To provide an authoritative and convincing account of events since 1945 *all* the factors involved have to be studied, not just a few of them. It is at this point that, sooner or later, a post-revisionist historiography will have to take over, and one hopes it will be rather sooner than later.

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The Intellectuals and the People

James Hitchcock

EVENTS in America in the past decade have often seemed contrived to stand Charles Peguy's famous dictum on its head—everything which has begun in *politique* has ended in *mystique*.

One by one definable social groups—blacks, students, women, Indians, Spanish-Americans, homosexuals—have discovered their oppressed status, analyzed their condition, and formulated programs to improve it. Yet the inevitable law in each case has been a rapid transformation in the movement not, as the media have so often made it appear, from "moderate" to "extremist" leadership but from a leadership which, however angry, is essentially pragmatic and concerned with specific problems and demands to a leadership intoxicated with mystical visions of group identity, ineffable perceptions of selfhood, inchoate anger, and fathomless frustration. The final stage of social protest has in each case been the ritual assertion of a truism—that the oppressed group experiences a sense of selfhood not ultimately accessible to any outsider, no matter how sympathetic, and that the group's liberation involves the bursting of bonds which the oppressor does not even dream exist but which are in some sense more real than the obvious chains. Paradoxically, this last, most extreme stage tends to induce political paralysis, as the "sympathetic" outsider concludes that the world of the oppressed is indeed so foreign that there is nothing to be done, and as the sources of discontent come to seem so profound as to be altogether beyond the reach of political action.

The last group subjected to this kind of subtle betrayal is the white working class, whose indigenous leaders have, mercifully, so far resisted whatever temptations they may have to mythologize their constituents. The work of mystification has, however, gone forward under the benevolent hands of sympathetic intellectuals like Michael Novak, agonizing over the inexpressible, indefinable reality of being Polish or Slovak or Irish and, as spokesmen for so many other groups have already done, making character and individuality a sign of superiority, a taunt flung in the face of outsiders.

The alienation of American intellectuals from the "working class" is apparently so complete that it was probably inevitable that when the working class was finally conceded status it would be misunderstood and miscategorized. White laborers have at last entered the intellectuals' world not, as in the 30's, as "The Workers" but as "White Ethnics." The simple truth, however, is that there are many places in the United States where ethnic identity has ceased to mean very much, where inherited national characteristics have been largely bred out, where identification in ethnic terms has all but disappeared. Ethnicity is no doubt a strong reality in other places, and there is no reason it should not be kept alive. But ethnic identity imposed on those who do not feel it is merely another form of patronizing, a manifestation of the sense that white laborers are not very interesting, and cannot be thought to have a mysterious inner core of being, unless through a picturesque foreign inheritance.

The provincialism of the intellectuals has often been noted, but it is nowhere more evident than in the fact that persons and groups are deemed not even to exist unless they can be fitted into currently prevailing schema of political interpretation. In an educated society reality is increasingly defined as that which the principal media of communication—including universities—recognize.

Thus until recently, so obscured was the white working class by other groups making successful claims upon the intellectuals' attention that it scarcely seemed to exist at all. Recognition of the white working class has been tainted, however, by fear. It is not unfair to say that for many intellectuals the working class, so patently out of step with the future, would probably not have been recognized at all if it had not proved to be a major obstacle to so many plans for social progress. Other groups are accorded sympathetic attention because their demands are deemed to be just, even if they are upper-middle-class students or women; workers are listened to in the hope that somehow the riddle of their pathology can be solved.

That workers, and indeed by extension much of the white middle class as well, are regarded as pathological, as in reality less than fully human, has been charged repeatedly and there have been

JAMES HITCHCOCK, here making his first appearance in these pages, is professor of history at St. Louis University. His articles have appeared in various publications, including the New York *Times Magazine* and *Dissent*.

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some liberal expressions of remorse. But the reality of liberal bigotry on this point is so overwhelming, and resolutions to amend it so unconvincing, that it bears repetition. A literary critic can refer casually to "that vast prejudice called New Jersey." A white Catholic social worker writes that "the black is able to feel both love and hate and be enhanced by them. In contrast, the whites feel only fear; fear their homes will be burned, their women conquered, or their possessions stolen. . . . The black man is within himself, and having achieved that can move to still greater comprehension. In contrast the white man has become estranged from his loathsome self-conception. . . ." A columnist for a liberal newspaper catches the suburban dweller "soaking up some weekend gin alone because all the neighbors are glued to the tube." Margaret Mead tells James Baldwin that, unlike the blacks and the Wasps, 19th-century immigrants were a disaster for America because they were materialistic and did not share the original dream. For a liberal book-reviewer, however, the Wasp himself is a "snivelling, trivial woman," doubting his manhood, posturing in front of his barroom cronies, laughed at by his children, dimly aware that his life is meaningless. A Yale professor caught in the midst of campus turmoil, deeply sympathetic to the students yet mildly disturbed by the extremists, sights two Italian youths (town-dwellers, not students) baiting the police. Sternly he asks them what they will confess to their priest: obviously they, unlike his students, are impervious to reasoned appeal; "superstition" is the only language they comprehend. As the historian A. J. P. Taylor has said, "no social scientist assumes that he himself is moronic, materialist, hysterical. But he assumes it of everyone else."

Relations between the races are poisoned by many things in America, but one of these is the fact that uneducated and inarticulate white people sense, however dimly, that social reformers do view them as pathological and that claims made on behalf of blacks to justify their advancement are implicitly denied with respect to whites. Radical social critics rejected almost unanimously the Moynihan thesis on black family life, and since then, to avoid the epithet "racist," one is required to view black ghetto life as intrinsically healthy, with all its viruses the direct result of white racism, and its people remarkably able to survive and even to thrive in an impossible world; even apparent pathologies are really healthy ways of coping with outside aggression. In sum, the radical-liberal view of lower-class black people amounts to a full acceptance of the mystique of race.

By contrast, radicals who undertake to study the white working class (Robert Coles is an exception) invariably discover a situation in which the workers are not only victims of the system (in this resembling blacks) but are too complacent and insensitive even to understand their victimization; they invariably misdiagnose their own problems, and finally succumb to illusory and self-destructive fantasies. Thus Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb* find, predictably, that white laborers in Boston are simultaneously fascinated and repelled by lower-class blacks and hippie students —they loathe them for rejecting middle-class values but also envy them their freedom and hedonistic self-indulgence. Parents sacrificing for their children's future are accused by these social-scientist observers of "the ultimate perversion of love: it permits you to practice that most insidious and devastating form of self-righteousness in which you, oppressed, in your anger turn on others who are also oppressed. . . ." Parents, in this view, use love and sacrifice essentially as means of controlling and manipulating their children.

A related myth of leftist intellectuals is that behind the seeming respectability of ordinary American family life unfathomable horrors are concealed. Following the Manson Family murders, an aide to a United States Senator (Frank Church) could write: "The Manson affair was piously condemned by pill-popping Americans who condemned Manson (not present at the killings) and then turned about and praised Calley. . . . Americans chose not to acknowledge that the California murders were committed by the girls next door under the direction of the high-school valedictorian. Despite the erotic embellishments, these murders simply represented another outbreak of apple-pie American violence." (Manson is in fact the son of a prostitute and spent his entire childhood and youth moving from one temporary home to another.) Considerable artistic energy has been expended portraying the essential emptiness and malice of conventional life in America, but an unperceived irony is that the enlightened social critics have not been appreciably more successful in holding their marriages together, bringing up their children, avoiding suicide, staying off drugs and alcohol, or building loving communities of persons.

It bears repeating that in terms of hard reality whites, even of the working class, enjoy rights and privileges which most blacks do not and that this situation is not likely to change substantially in the near future. The discontent of lower-class whites is fanned, however, by what they perceive, often correctly, the intentions of social reformers to be. The radical reformer sees blacks as perfectly capable of defining their own needs, if only white society will permit it, while the majority of whites are not conceded the same competence. Not only must whites be held in check lest their greed and racism further impede the black struggle for justice, but whites are not even capable of perceiving their own self-interest correctly. Young

* In *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, reviewed in these pages by Sara Sanborn, December 1972.—Ed.

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college-educated radicals thus enter the factories as covert missionaries, since white workers, unlike black, have not been able to produce decent leaders.

Massive resistance to programs of social reform is often galvanized by the awareness that, if whites presently have more privileges than blacks, it is the goal of many reformers to reverse this situation; not only do the resisters fear that jobs will be taken from whites and given to blacks but, more subtly, that blacks will be conceded political rights which whites will be denied. Blacks in Harlem are to have the right to veto construction of a state office building or a university gymnasium, but whites in Forest Hills are not to be allowed to veto public housing. Black school boards can exclude white teachers from their district in Brooklyn, and openly promote a "black pride" which comes close to being anti-white, but white school boards will be forbidden to do the reverse elsewhere. A white advocate of compulsory school busing characterizes opposition by the National Black Political Convention as "thoughtful," while dismissing white opposition as reactionary and racist. Edgar Z. Friedenberg says black hostility to whites who enter the ghetto is an expression of a healthy sense of community, but it is the kind of community which, if manifested by whites in Cicero or Rosedale, is labeled immoral.

THAT racism exists on all levels of American society is undeniable. But the free employment of the term, either as a rhetorical weapon or as a category of analysis, merely points up the anomaly of the situation. Few people will admit to being racists; most do not think of themselves as such. To accuse someone of racism is to claim, in effect, to know him better than he knows himself. When the evidence of words and actions is substantial, it is a judgment which can be legitimately ventured. But racist motives are now commonly postulated as covert, implying the ability of the outside observer to penetrate the inner reality of masses of people with whom he has had no significant contact. (A liberal lawyer in San Francisco can apply the term, for example, to a nameless truck driver in Michigan.) The rhetoric of oppressed groups is always accepted at face value; their grievances are what they perceive them to be, their motives exactly what they claim. The white masses, however, are always believed to have hidden intentions which need to be ferreted out by perceptive intellectual observers. Claims to oppose busing out of love for the neighborhood school, or opposition to subsidized housing out of fear of crime, are immediately dismissed as subterfuges and rationalizations. Once the key to white behavior has been discovered, it can be made to explain every phenomenon. Thus the *New Yorker*'s City Hall reporter, Andy Logan, explains that white citizens who object to public housing of a general character in their neighborhoods will accept subsidized housing for the elderly because most elderly people are white. (Blacks have short life spans, and those who survive to old age are cared for by their loving children, so unlike callous white children.) The fact that elderly people, black or white, commit few crimes is implicitly deemed irrelevant. Miss Logan also explains that white firemen who seek transfers out of the black ghetto are not worried about the greater hazards there, as they claim, but prefer working in more prosperous neighborhoods where they are close to their moonlighting jobs and there are more opportunities for minor graft.

The logical implication of this pervasively negative view of the American masses is that democracy, understood as anything approaching majority rule or self-government, is increasingly dubious, since "the people" lack both the virtue and the wisdom to exercise power. The busing issue, aside from the practical problems involved, is of immense symbolic significance because it presents the clearest example of a plan for social reform, conceived and implemented by an intellectual elite, imposed on ordinary people against their customs, beliefs, and instincts. (In the minds of many people, the point of the Supreme Court's 1954 school decision was that any student should have the right to attend the school most convenient to his home and could not be excluded; the busing plan seems to reverse this.) The social-engineering mentality, with its inherent contempt for popular wisdom, continues to permeate the Left. Richard Sennett proposes that the federal government force people to live in disorderly, heterogeneous neighborhoods instead of the placid, homogeneous communities they usually choose. In St. Louis an advocate of rapid transit argues that it will force people to deal with each other face to face, overcoming the voluntary atomization produced by the automobile. In 1970 a candidate for Congress from Vermont, Dennis Morriseau, proclaimed that deep down many Americans wish to kill anyone who is free—black militants and radical young people. (Such beliefs did not win Morriseau the election.) He wished to ban political commercials from television because they appeal only to voters' hates and fears and also to bar all political polls because "it's nonsense to find out what the voters' opinions are on any given issue, because they're bound to be uninformed in a closed system." At the same time it was Morriseau's stated intention to "show the people that they count, that their votes count. . . ."

Popular resistance to social engineering is in part a reaction to "radical chic," which, although there has been some ritual atonement for it in the liberal-radical community, remains a major problem. The offensiveness of what Joseph W. Bishop, Jr. has called "Social Register socialism" is intensified, and rendered more than symbolic, by the awareness that lower-middle-class and working-class whites are often asked to achieve things

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which their presumed betters—those who are enlightened, educated, aware, articulate, and socially secure—have not themselves managed to achieve. The cutting edge of school and housing integration is usually at the lower end of the social pyramid; self-conscious liberals can integrate with black professors and bureaucrats. Few radical young people choose to attend black colleges; and on sophisticated, racially mixed campuses white and black students generally maintain separate living quarters, separate political organizations, and at best an uneasy coexistence in social relationships. Students looking for off-campus housing tend to avoid high-crime areas as determinedly as blue-collar workers do.

Few intellectuals are any longer so disingenuous as to regard fear of crime as a manifestation of white paranoia (as Philip Slater suggested in *The Pursuit of Loneliness*, for example), but it is a subject which the Left is still unable to face because it tends to break apart neatly constructed, political categories. Liberals soothingly assure frightened whites that blacks are the most common victims of crime and, by implication, that whites have nothing extraordinary to fear. Eldridge Cleaver, however, insists that black crime is racially motivated and that most black aggressors would prefer to assault white victims if they could find them. The difficulty of racial integration on the neighborhood level, generally unacknowledged on the Left, is that a handful of determined separatists can effectively sabotage the good intentions of a majority of blacks and whites. In "changing neighborhoods" militant white racists, if they perceive the changes as irreversible, are likely to move, while militant black racists tend to stay and thereby acquire increasing importance. The ambivalence at the heart of the crime problem—whether or not crime by blacks against whites should be seen as racially motivated—is one manifestation of a larger uncertainty which is reflected in the vague sense many whites have that they are being manipulated by social reformers through the alternation of carrot and stick, moral suasion and naked threat. Barely implicit in a certain kind of radical social analysis is the exhortation, "You have a moral duty to welcome blacks as your brothers and accord them full acceptance. But, no matter how strenuously you seek to convert yourself, you will remain at heart a racist and at heart blacks will continue to hate you."

Racial justice has been advocated as a moral imperative, demanded by religion and the American tradition, and simultaneously postulated as the irresistible outcome of a revolution which will probably be violent. The language of duty alternates with the language of threat and produces confusion, resentment, and resistance. Similar tactics have been used to legitimize the "youth revolt," as sympathetic commentators like J. Anthony Lukas oscillate between assuring parents that their rebellious offspring are in fact essentially traditionalists, merely putting into practice the values learned at home and school, and predicting an emergent world which is totally new and radically different from any society of the past, which parents cannot possibly comprehend and which they can only live in successfully by consenting to learn from the young (Margaret Mead's suggestion). The fearful and bewildered are thus alternately lulled into security and stampeded into panicky action depending on which tactic seems most appropriate at the moment. They can then either be ridiculed for their hysteria or excoriated for their complacency.

Indeed, the confrontation between radical reformers and an increasingly resentful and resistant white working class tends to coalesce around the issue of "radical youth" even more than around race. The youth culture of the 60's was profoundly hostile to working-class culture, a fact which blue-collar fathers sensed quite early, even before it was made plain by interpreters like Charles Reich or the motion picture *Joe*. Long hair and mod clothes are now commonplace, but originally they were intended to say something, and for the most part white laborers (and the bourgeoisie) interpreted the message correctly. The counter-culture openly flaunted what workers did not possess—leisure, mobility, the absence of financial or familial responsibilities, youth, nimbleness of mind, an apparently untrammeled hedonism. To that extent the thesis that workers resent the "freedom" of the radical young is probably correct, although it is the understandable resentment of those who see other people's privileges paraded before them and feel themselves despised because they lack these same privileges. Laboring men also sensed that the most significant thing dividing them from the young radicals was their own inability to articulate adequately, which left the young always victorious in any encounter, which doomed in advance all efforts to legitimize their lower-middle-class world. The youth of the 60's were not bookish; they prided themselves instead on the quality of their experiences, continually opening up new worlds. Yet many within the working-class—policemen and firemen, nurses—regularly have experiences of "life" far more varied and elemental than those of most young people. Implicitly, however, these experiences have been devalued, and mobile young people alone have been thought to have an adequate sense of human realities. The counter-culture has continually "discovered" areas of reality—poverty, injustice, factory workers, the aged, frauds perpetrated on consumers—which ordinary people have been aware of all their lives.

On all these matters, working-class and middle-class fathers, not without reason, often see themselves in competition for the loyalties of their children with the media, teachers, and other young

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people. (A white community organizer says, "Let the fathers be as reactionary as they want; we'll get their kids.") Kenneth Keniston has pointed to the radicalization of college students as a sign of the effectiveness of education in the 60's, and numerous professional educators now appear to accept a similar criterion for measuring their work. The explicit purpose of some teachers has become that of weaning students away from opinions and values learned at home, of introducing them to a cultural world which will be not only unfamiliar to the parents but hostile and threatening to them as well.

Calls for programs in ethnic studies or "white working-class culture" in the colleges have an unconvincing ring, mainly because there is little evidence of any student (or parent) demand for them. Nonetheless, the call effectively unmasks a central hypocrisy of radical educators—they permit themselves the luxury of "imposing" an alien cultural or political viewpoint on "conservative" students, a practice they deem impermissible with respect to black or radical white students. Genuine respect for the milieu from which working-class students emerge would require a sympathetic probing of attitudes which are now generally dismissed through the caricature of Archie Bunker; it would require the radical teacher to learn to respect petty-bourgeois ambition, the desire for material security, instinctive moderation in politics, and a strong preference for an orderly and stable society.

Instead the counter-culture has half-deliberately served to preserve the cultural distance between the upper-middle class and those below it at a time when the gap was perhaps being narrowed. As workers' children started winning National Merit scholarships and going off to Ivy League colleges, the children of the affluent announced their boredom with the "whole academic rat race" and it suddenly was fashionable to be a college dropout. As workers prided themselves on being able to buy their children decent clothes, teach them good manners, and train them up in a respectable morality, they found the tables had been stunningly turned on them by the children of privilege, who began wearing denim and dirty sweatshirts, cultivating a deliberate rudeness, using drugs, and flaunting the institution of marriage. Proud that their sons were at last about to fulfill the American Dream, through the medium of college degrees and corporate jobs, the workers discovered that the Dream was now despised. Those who had already enjoyed its benefits had contrived to cast a pall over the enjoyment of those who came later. In a daring move, the children of the privileged managed to appropriate to themselves all the "privileges" formerly reserved for the lowest classes—carelessness about dress and speech, idleness, rejection of all imposed discipline, drugs, an irregular sex life, anarchic unconcern for established institutions.

MANY traditional liberal assumptions about the effects of formal education have been badly shaken by recent American history. Such education does indeed turn students' political loyalties leftward, although the degree to which this is due to outright indoctrination remains unexamined; it does indeed foster a critical spirit toward inherited beliefs and conventional social arrangements. But that it develops real intellectual autonomy, the ability to discriminate between the true and the false, the substantial and the chimerical, is now gravely in doubt. In the decade just ended intellectuals in America have been the most susceptible to fads and absurdities, the most easily manipulable by visionary fanatics and outright charlatans, of any social class. Whatever the values of formal education, they do not include inoculation against fashionable foolishness.

Events in America in the past decade have served also to stand traditional conservative social thought on its head. The masses, as it turns out, are not, as so many elitist commentators have warned, fickle and inordinately susceptible to fads and demagoguery. They are instead the last bulwarks of tradition and stability in a society whose educated classes prove to be increasingly in love with change for change's sake and with limitless disorder. As the past Presidential election indicated, the simple desire for an orderly and relatively stable society takes precedence over almost every other consideration in the minds of the white majority, even with many of those who might have something tangible to gain from radically altered economic arrangements.

Unexpectedly, these realizations provide an awareness also of the unique role which the uneducated masses play in a democracy, in their untutored state and not merely as candidates for enlightenment. Quite simply, it is the task of the people to act as skeptics relative to the dreams of the intelligentsia, even as the intellectuals have sought to be critics of popular mythology. Nearly drowning the thoughtful and hopeful programs of reform of the past decade were innumerable ideas and plans which were simply absurd and even sinister. Changes have been urged, and partially implemented, which have proved disastrous to local communities, schools and universities, political and religious groups; often the proponents of such changes have learned from their failures only that they ought to have been more "radical." In an intellectual atmosphere often fevered, apocalyptic, and willfully credulous and uncritical, changes which might have been disastrous on a major scale were prevented from occurring primarily because of the inarticulate skepticism, the inert resistance, of the common people. If intellectuals have usually remained cool in the midst of popular hysteria, in recent years it has often been the general populace which preserved its sanity in the face of the peculiar hysteria of the highly educated.

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Social disorder has been linked to obvious and concrete injustices and some rebellions spring from a justified sense of deprivation. But the recent history of countries like Sweden and the Netherlands which, compared with the United States, scarcely have social problems, suggests that a reasonably just society is by no means a guarantee that restless iconoclasm will not develop; it suggests that such iconoclasm may be endemic to the bored modern intelligentsia, searching for a social role.

The nation does not need a revival of populist mythology; the Wallace phenomenon leaves no room for benign complacency and the implicit dangers of unbridled majoritarianism are real enough, along with the potential for mass anti-intellectualism. The election of John F. Kennedy, a President who associated with intellectuals and cultivated a scholarly image, began a sharp reversal in the attitude of American society toward the things of the mind. The years immediately following saw financial and moral support for education increase dramatically. Universities and professors enjoyed an importance and a prestige unprecedented in American history. The resources of the intellectual community were systematically brought to bear on almost all aspects of national policy. Innumerable popular taboos were broken with the approval of a growing constituency of sophisticated, iconoclastic, self-confident, yet self-probing citizens. The bursting of that bubble at the end of the 60's had a number of causes, prominent among which was a widespread feeling that the intelligentsia had become too prominent and influential, to an extent in politics and to a much greater extent in setting the tone and direction of American culture. The New Left had taught the citizenry to see themselves as passive victims of the Establishment; this mentality enabled them to recognize that they were being manipulated by the intellectual Establishment as well.

The ultimate danger of unchecked populism may indeed be fascism, and the quiescent reaction of the coming decade may simply insure another era of orgiastic experimentation sometime in the future. But the intellectual community has, for the most part, still not faced many of the lessons of the decade just past—the susceptibility of so many in that community to every kind of absurdity which is labeled radical, the bewilderment and acquiescence in the face of nakedly coercive acts and totalitarian ideologies, the readiness to jettison scholarly and intellectual activities in the service of dubious causes. A weary apocalypticism pervades some segments of the enlightened community, as in Gore Vidal's remark that the end of the human race would be preferable to present existence. There is new and unabashed admiration for totalitarian states like China, which stimulates inevitable speculation as to how far leftist intellectuals might go in welcoming similar social arrangements in America.

ANYTHING like a healthy progressivism in American politics will depend in the future on maintaining the delicate balance between the bias toward change inherent in the intellectual community and a noticeable segment of the upper-middle class, and the often sullen skepticism and love of stability inherent in the mass of the white population. A viable democracy cannot dispense with either component—the free play of imagination and the restless dissatisfaction with existing social arrangements bred in people who enjoy leisure and a minimum social and economic security and, often enough, are not required to test their ideas in the real world; and the sense of limited possibility, the desire to conserve hard-won gains, the inevitable narrowness of those whose lives and work are circumscribed by hard physical realities. In the end the most important lesson of the last ten years may be that if there is no necessary virtue in the untutored sons of toil, there is also no necessary higher truth in the moral and political beliefs of those who mistake articulateness for wisdom.

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Observations

A Look at Margaret Mead

Sheila K. Johnson

In the mid-1960's, when I was doing graduate work in anthropology, a favorite topic of debate in the student commons used to be whether Margaret Mead was "any good" as an anthropologist. Being somewhat older than most of my fellow students, and having been drawn into the field partly by *Coming of Age in Samoa*, I used to defend Mead vigorously: just because she could write well and had become something of a public figure—given to spouting off about anything from Nazism to premarital sex—was no reason to denigrate her professionally. Now I have finished reading her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter*,* and while I don't exactly want to reverse my earlier position, I wonder whether it isn't time to revive some of the arguments on both sides.

Margaret Mead was the first-born child in an academically-minded family (both her mother and father had Ph.D.'s) and was raised without any *conscious* sense of conflict between her identity as a woman and her desire to use her mind. (I stress the word "conscious" because there is a good deal of indirect evidence in her autobiography that points in quite a different direction.) Although she married young, immediately upon her graduation from Barnard, this too did not affect her plans. She and Luther Cressman, her young husband who planned to become a minister but was then studying sociology, practiced birth control and went to graduate school together. And when Margaret confessed to a burning desire to "go to the field" to study a primitive tribe, Luther obligingly obtained a scholarship to Europe for himself for the nine months that they would be separated.

Out of this first field trip, undertaken when Mead was only twenty-four, came her most engaging and important book, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), but it also cost her her first husband. For on the boat coming from Samoa to Europe, where she planned to join Luther, she met Reo Fortune, a young New Zealander on his way to Cambridge to study psychology. Mead is fairly frank about the attraction that she and Fortune felt for each other on that long ocean voyage, but about the reunion with her husband in Marseille, she writes only: "That is one of the moments I would take back and live differently, if I could."

Mead's next field trip, this time as Reo Fortune's wife, was a six-month stay among the Manus people of New Guinea, out of which came her *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930) and Fortune's *Manus Religion* (1935). While back in the United States writing these books, the couple also managed to squeeze in a three-month research project among the Omaha Indians in Nebraska, which led to Mead's *Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe* (1932) and Fortune's *Omaha Secret Societies* (1932). And, by late 1931, they were back in the South Seas again.

This next field trip proved to be difficult for Mead both personally and professionally. She and Fortune began by spending seven months among the Mountain Arapesh, a New Guinea tribe living close to the subsistence level and therefore almost exclusively preoccupied with the daily struggle to obtain food. In her autobiography

Sheila K. Johnson, *a new contributor, is an anthropologist and free-lance writer whose work has appeared in the* New York Times Magazine *and elsewhere.*

* Morrow, 305 pp., $8.95.

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Mead writes that she found this culture, "in which there were so few ceremonies and little elaboration, very thin, and it taxed all my by now well-developed field skills to make anything of it"—a surprising statement in view of the fact that she later went on to write a five-part, 675-page monograph on the Arapesh.

Next, she and Fortune spent three-and-a-half months among the Mundugumor, also a New Guinea tribe, whom Mead disliked intensely (they were an aggressive, hostile people who still practiced infanticide) but by whom Fortune—at least according to Mead—"was both repelled and fascinated." Finally, toward the end of the year, they moved to the Sepik River area (still in New Guinea), hoping to find a third, somewhat more congenial, culture to study.

They found their culture—the Tchambuli—and also Mead's future (third) husband. Gregory Bateson, a young English anthropologist, was studying the Iatmul, a tribe situated near the Tchambuli; and after helping Mead and Fortune get settled in their village, he became a frequent visitor. Mead at that point was interested in the problem of individual temperament and its relationship to sexual and cultural differences. She ultimately concluded—in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) and *Male and Female* (1949)—that there was such a thing as inborn temperamental propensities but that these were modified by the cultural styles prescribed for males and females. Eventually, in the course of their theoretical discussions out in the bush, Mead, Fortune, and Bateson took to analyzing each other as well as the tribes they had been studying. "It became clear that Gregory and I were close together in temperament—represented, in fact, a male and a female version of a temperamental type that was in strong contrast with the one represented by Reo"; and "we also discussed the implications for personal relationships. For example, what were the implications for a marriage in which the partners had essentially the same temperament?" In this highly intellectual game, Fortune clearly became odd-man-out, and upon their return to civilization Mead separated from him and, two years later, married Bateson.

Mead's next field trip, in the company of Bateson, lasted two-and-a-half years, much of it spent in Bali, but also including a return visit to the Iatmul at the Sepik River. Bateson was interested in photography, and he and Mead took some 28,000 stills, in addition to movie footage, illustrating various aspects of Balinese and Iatmul culture. In keeping with the old research adage that one's methods often dictate the results, the two chief publications growing out of this Bali field trip were essentially picture-books: Bateson and Mead's *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* (1942) and Mead and Macgregor, *Growth and Culture: A Photographic Study of Balinese Childhood* (1951).

Mead and Bateson returned to the United States on the eve of World War II, and both of them soon became involved in war-related social-science research. Mead also discovered that much to her surprise, for she had been told when she was twenty-five that she could not have children, she was pregnant. In December of 1939, at the age of nearly thirty-eight, she gave birth to a daughter. The last fifth of Mead's autobiography is given over almost exclusively to a lyrical account of her daughter's earliest years—how she reacted to the then-new Spockian principles of child-raising—and the more recent birth of her daughter's first child. Mead glosses over her work during these intervening years, saying only that "since the 1940's I have moved in new directions." And, despite her paeans to family life, she refers only obliquely to the fact that in 1945 her marriage to Bateson also came to an end.

To FIND out what became of Margaret Mead professionally between 1940 and 1972, one can begin by consulting the inside flap and back of the dust-jacket of her autobiography, which read like a *Who's Who* entry of honorary titles and awards, of conferences attended, speeches given, and task-forces organized. It is, in fact, these last thirty years of activities that have given her a world-wide reputation as everybody's grandmother and that have caused many anthropologists to dismiss her as a serious scholar. But if one looks carefully at her early work—and Mead says without a trace of false modesty that by the age of thirty-four, "I had what amounted to a lifetime of completed work behind me"—it becomes obvious that there was never a sharp break between her scientific research and her punditry. Even her earliest book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, contains two rather preachy concluding chapters about the implications of Samoan education for our own society. Her later columns in *Redbook*, lectures on the generation gap, and raps on race are no more than an extension of this early propensity to moralize. In fact, one would have to say that only a minuscule proportion of Mead's output is truly scientific. Her monographs about the Arapesh, the Omaha, and the Manus kinship system are competent—if not very original—works of social science. *Coming of Age in Samoa* is aimed at a popular audience and written in an anecdotal style, but still deals with an interesting and important theoretical question. Significantly, it was a question not chosen by Mead herself but set for her by her teacher, Franz Boas. Boas had become interested in adolescence, and he wanted Mead to test out "on the one hand, the extent to which the troubles of adolescence, called in German *Sturm und Drang* and *Weltschmerz*, depended upon the attitudes of a particular culture and, on the other hand, the extent to which they were inherent in the adolescent stage of psychobiological development with all its discrepancies, uneven growth, and new impulses." In Samoa, Mead found a society in which children moved without any inner turmoil from childhood into a period of sexual experimentation and, eventually, marriage. Her book is therefore a case study of a negative instance, arguing that because Samoan adolescence does not involve great emotional upheavals, cultures, rather than universally present biological factors, condition human behavior.

Today scientists laugh at such a

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categorical, one-sided resolution of the nature-nurture problem; but in 1928 Mead's demonstration of the cultural impact on adolescent behavior was as important as Malinowski's demonstration that the Oedipus complex did not exist in a matrilineal society. Mead subsequently modified her views about the impact of inborn traits—particularly with reference to male and female roles and temperament—but her work on this subject remained anecdotal and illustrative at a time when other social and biological scientists were turning to experimental or carefully controlled research. As a result, her books *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* and *Male and Female* have been misunderstood and attacked from all sides. *Male and Female*, for example, has been criticized by Diana Trilling for ignoring Freud's insights into the psychological impact of being male or female; at the same time it was roasted by Betty Friedan for being a sexist tract urging women to have babies and be "feminine." The problem, I think, is that Mead's discursive approach often permits her to stand on all sides of all issues and leaves her open to such attacks.

A DIFFERENT but related case is the current controversy over Mead's views about the generation gap. As the anthropologist Cora du Bois has pointed out, Mead has long been interested in sociocultural change viewed as generational interaction. That is to say, in several books and articles—most notably in *New Lives for Old* (1956), her restudy of the Manus people whom she first described in *Growing Up in New Guinea*—Mead has focused upon various generations as they are simultaneously exposed to rapid social change. Again, because she favors an anecdotal approach, one is treated primarily to descriptions of incidents in which a father and son disagree or a young middle-aged man states proudly to the visiting anthropologist, "We used to do things this way, but now we do them differently." It is all very persuasive, but no evidence is provided to indicate the prevalence of the habits or traits she describes, and—more serious for an anthropologist purporting to deal with personality change in response to social change—she offers no psychological data, such as depth interviews or responses to psychological tests. In the case of her second field trip among the Manus, such tests were administered in great profusion, but—as Mead admits in the Appendix of *New Lives for Old*—they had not yet been analyzed when she wrote her book.

Her latest assertions about social change as a generational phenomenon are so broad as to defy the rules of scientific evidence altogether. First delivered in 1969 in the form of lectures and subsequently published as *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (1970), Mead's thesis is that children born post-1945 are living in a world in which they feel at home but which their elders can barely cope with, let alone comprehend. Prior to this supposed watershed, she argues, cultures were either "postfigurative"—given to very little social change so that parents and grandparents were of some use in socializing children—or "cofigurative"—experiencing social change but of an order that both adults and children could assimilate. Today, Mead argues, all cultures are "prefigurative" and adults are of no use at all: "there are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born," and "the young, free to act on their own initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown." Not surprisingly, these ideas, so similar to Charles Reich's formulation of Consciousness III, are enormously popular on college campuses.

One may well ask what sort of relevance Margaret Mead herself, at age seventy-one, can have for the trackless young; but she has explained that in addition to having been raised almost seven decades ahead of her time (which puts her back at the culturally innocent age of one) the generational crisis we are facing "is, in fact, perceived most accurately not by the young, but by their discerning and prophetic elders." A somewhat less apocalyptic explanation, which has a long and honorable history in anthropology, is that there is always a generation gap of sorts between parents and their children, in response to which children often form alliances with the grandparental generation against the middle, power-holding group. According to this view, the young and old ends of the age-spectrum are hostile to the middle sector because they lack the status that an achievement-oriented society awards those who are productive. This view also assumes that the situation is natural and resolves itself: the young become middle-aged and find the world less easy to understand than they once thought; the old eventually die off.

I RAISE these points about Mead's work not because I dislike popularized anthropology: it is, in fact, my favorite bedtime reading. But I am disturbed when a famous popularizer tries to pass himself, or herself, off as scientifically beyond reproach. And though it may be admirable for some individuals to attempt to act as bridges between the worlds of hard science and popular culture, there is a great temptation to use the cachet acquired in one area to enhance one's status in the other. Thus while Mead is not so highly regarded as an anthropologist by other anthropologists, she is often deferred to by them (particularly at large and public meetings) because of her nonacademic reputation; and when she testifies or speaks out publicly on matters she knows little or nothing about (marijuana, arms control, space flight), she is listened to because of her supposed expertise as an anthropologist. I am reminded, in this connection, of a Berkeley cocktail party I once attended in honor of C. P. Snow. At one end of the room several literary critics and novelists were saying, *sotto voce*, "Well, he's really a terrible novelist, but I hear he's quite a good physicist," while at the other end of the room a group of famous physicists were saying to each other, "Of course, he's no good as a physicist, but I hear he's written some nice novels." It was the first time it had occurred to me that the outcome of attempting to bridge two worlds might be simply a pratfall between two stools.

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The Art of Diane Arbus

Richard Schickel

UNTIL recently it seemed that photography as a serious art (not as an adjunct to fashion and advertising) would be confined to two major traditions. On the one hand there was the salon tradition, that of the print composed as carefully as a painting and dealing in the same conventionalized subject matter—nudes, still lifes, landscapes, etc. On the other, there was photo-journalism, the art of what Cartier-Bresson, one of its great practitioners, called "the decisive moment." In this tradition, the photographer armed with lightweight equipment and fast film intruded (generally as unobtrusively as possible) on our public—and even our private—lives, hoping to catch us unaware at some moment of high drama and, by recording the physical manifestations of our emotional responses, both to particularize and (if he was very lucky) to summarize in human terms the meaning of large events and universal experiences.

About the former tradition, the less said the better, in my opinion. Salon work, in the early decades of this century, did help make photography respectable in some degree, but since its standards and its real subject—light—were borrowed from painting it had little claim to separate existence as a medium. Photo-journalism was a much more vigorous field. The work done in it was true to itself, what it accomplished was something that could only have been done by a camera. Its greatest figures (Eisenstaedt, W. Eugene Smith, David Douglas Duncan, Margaret Bourke-White) may well come to rank among the significant minor artists of their time—if the present trend toward recognition of photography as a full-fledged artistic medium continues. Still, in the last decade or so, even photo-journalism was beginning to seem rather played out—perhaps because most of the best young photographers were going into motion pictures, or because there was a steady decline in the markets—mostly magazines—that used it. In any case, the glamor was gone.

Given the limits (and the recent decline) of these two traditions, the importance of the work of the late Diane Arbus cannot be overestimated, though it may seem to some that it *has* been, the recent exhibition of her work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the publication of a book based on that show* having resulted in the most extraordinary outburst of publicity and criticism I can ever remember being accorded to a single photographer's work. As Hilton Kramer quite boldly but accurately stated, Mrs. Arbus "was one of those figures—as rare in the annals of photography as in any other medium—who suddenly, by a daring leap into a territory formerly regarded as forbidden, altered the terms of the art she practiced."

Still, it seems to me that most of the talk about her has centered around her gothic subject matter and around the mysteries of her personality, while ignoring the question of technique, which is to me the realm where she made her most exciting (and, I would guess, her most lasting) contribution. To begin with, it only *seems* that her principal subjects were the physical and psychological misfits of the world—midgets, transvestites, the mentally ill—probably because these photographs, amounting to fewer than half of those published in the book, have the greatest immediate impact. (One cannot say they are the most arresting, since a first glance at many of them has the opposite effect—one's hand fairly flies to turn the page.) For the most part, though, her photographs are of quite ordinary people whom she encountered at the beach, in the park, at parades, dances, weddings. They often look crazy or vacuous or just plain worn down, but one gets no sense that the photographer was doing them dirt—catching them unawares or, conversely, manipulating them into self-divestation. On the contrary, the evidence is that upon seeing subjects who interested her she carefully went about gaining their confidence, enlisting their cooperation, getting them to pose in their homes or against other backgrounds that felt natural to them. The results, viewed as a group, are moving precisely because she appears to have treated everyone so even-handedly. "I work from awkwardness," she once said. "By that I mean I don't like to arrange things. If I stand in front of something, instead of arranging it, I arrange myself." In short, she opened herself up as well as her lens and therefore her photographs of persons we are ordinarily pleased to think of as exotic have a kind of sweetness, an innocence, that is unavailable in any other graphic representations of them that I know.

In a similar fashion Mrs. Arbus's "normal" subjects have a singularity that is simply not revealed in the work of photographers consciously committed to the liberal, humanist line most often used to

RICHARD SCHICKEL, *a writer and critic, is currently producing, writing, and directing a series of television documentaries on film directors.*

* *Diane Arbus*, edited by Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel, Aperture Monograph, Unpaged, $15.00.

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justify their work and most forcefully enunciated in the famous *Family of Man* exhibit over fifteen years ago. Indeed, Mrs. Arbus had something very good to say on this matter: ". . . when I first began to photograph I thought, there are an awful lot of people in the world and it's going to be terribly hard to photograph all of them, so if I photograph some kind of generalized human being, everybody'll recognize it. It'll be like what they used to call the common man or something. It was my teacher, Lisette Model, who finally made it clear to me that the more specific you are, the more general it'll be."

To her great credit, Mrs. Arbus did not replace that familiar rationale for the photographer's work with something more up to date. She was not, for instance, an R.D. Laing with a camera, romanticizing the insane at the expense of the ordinary. Nor did she imply that her subjects, sane or insane, were the victims of an unjust social or political order. Her works make no special plea of any kind. She knew, and cheerfully admitted, what every photographer should know, that photography is the most accidental of arts, just because of the subtle, indiscernible time lapse between the decision to snap the shutter and the instant of its accomplishment—just time enough, as inevitably happens, for the subject to alter his expression in some way he doesn't know and the photographer cannot observe. That is why we are always so anxious to know how our pictures "came out." And why Mrs. Arbus could say, "I never have taken a picture I intended. They're always better or worse." And, "I would never choose a subject for what it means to me or what I think about it. You've just got to choose a subject, and what you feel about it, what it means, begins to unfold if you just . . . do it enough."

Her subjects—that is, the human beings who posed for her—were more varied, as I've said, than most critics have noted. But her *subject*—her central concern—was unvarying. It was not so much loneliness or alienation, but the range of our attempted defenses against them: the widow in her bedroom, for instance, subtly distanced from the amazingly ornate desk crammed with her obviously treasured collection of *objets d'art*, which look to the camera like junk, completely incapable of assuaging the unnamable pain we sense in their owner's pose and gaze. All her portraits of individuals suggest an alienation from their possessions, from the very furnishings of their homes, from the things they hoped would console them.

But it is in her pictures of group efforts at community that Mrs. Arbus's work is most poignant and troubling. The king and queen of a senior citizens' dance, bedecked in the costumer's paste-jewel crowns and phony ermine robes, sit on widely separated thrones and gaze solemnly into and through the camera as if hoping it might teach them the meaning of their coronation. Nudists stare unblinking into the camera, and we wonder if the fellowship that is supposed to be the reward for their nakedness is sufficient recompense for their absurd exposure. The inmates of an insane asylum caper on its lawns in masks and costumes fulfilling, one imagines, some social worker's idea of a "good time," which incidentally parodies and illuminates all the other "good times" Mrs. Arbus recorded in the outside world, our world.

YET one does not want to make too much of this, if only because Diane Arbus appears not to have. Because she chose to look upon things others had not, because she was a well-bred middle-class woman who turned away from a flourishing career in fashion photography, and because, finally, she died a suicide, there is a tendency to want to make her into a cult figure on the order of Sylvia Plath. But it is not a role she would have wanted. Surely she understood that her sensibility was a unique one and equally surely this sense of her own uniqueness drew her toward people who were singular in other ways. ("Most people go through life dreading they'll have a traumatic experience. Freaks were born with their trauma. They've already passed their test in life.") But the introduction to the book, from which I've been quoting, is drawn from remarks she made to students and interviewers and they reveal her as a mostly cheerful, even chipper, ironist who appeared to have passed her own self-imposed test and to be justly, but not overbearingly, proud of so doing (". . . I really believe there are things nobody would see unless I photographed them"). It was, indeed, her lack of pretentiousness that prevented her pictures from becoming exercises in the fashionable grotesque, prevented the imposition of alien ideological interpretations on them, and was, I'm certain, the basis on which she established her inimitable technique.

What she did in this area amounted to a radical purification of the photographic image. On the one hand she stripped away all reference to the "painterly" in her prints, on the other she abandoned any effort at capturing the height of an action or an emotion, "the decisive moment." Nearly all of her subjects are in repose, and nearly all actively, consciously collaborate with her in the creation of the photograph. In effect, she turned her back on professionalism, on all the established notions of what constituted a proper aesthetic for a serious photographer. And thereupon she recreated herself in the oldest, humblest tradition available, that of the documentarian. Actually, what her photographs most remind us of compositionally are snapshots—the subjects carefully centered, looking straight into the camera, the photographer careful to include as much of the background as possible.

Mrs. Arbus consciously acknowledged what Aunt Emma and Uncle Stu instinctively understand when they group the family for a birthday or anniversary pose—that the places we choose (or make) say something significant about us, are a legitimate part of the record. Similarly, the act of involving the subject with the camera, of making

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him conscious of the need to present an image to the lens, to those perfect strangers who may see the shot later, leads, paradoxically, to greater revelation than in a picture taken unawares. Even the attempt to hide a flaw or emphasize some good point tells volumes. As Mrs. Arbus once said, "Everybody has that thing where they need to look one way but they come out looking another way and that's what people observe. You see someone on the street and essentially what you notice about them is the flaw . . . there's a point between what you want people to know about you and what you can't help people knowing about you . . . the gap between intention and effect."

HER manner is easy enough to emulate—millions of snapshot amateurs, after all, employ it endlessly. The question is whether other photographers, burdened with the necessity of proving to an essentially hostile artistic community that they deserve membership, burdened also with the breed's powerful desire for self-assertion, to "interpret" reality and thus "make a statement," can achieve the kind of selflessness she achieved. "For me the subject of the picture is always more important than the picture," she said. "And more complicated. . . . I mean it has to be *of* something. And what it's of is always more remarkable than what it is." Which is to say, I suppose, that her style amounts to no style in the conventional sense, her technique no technique at all. But the attainment of this radical simplification, especially for a well-schooled professional photographer, must have required the most determined self-discipline. In a time of undisciplined art, when many, in all media, have lusted after the large, general comment about the wretched of the earth, it is her self-effacing manner—not, as she may have thought, her subjects—that sets her apart. It is the austerity and specificity of her technique that makes her an exemplary figure, her loss a major one.

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Movies

Remember Thou Art Pulp

William S. Pechter

I THOUGHT when I wrote about *Bed and Board* that I wouldn't want to be writing about Truffaut again for the foreseeable future, but then the future has a peculiar disposition to be unforeseeable. *Two English Girls* may lack the occasional compelling intensity of the fatally miscast *Mississippi Mermaid*, but it is immeasurably more interesting than such other, perhaps more conventionally successful, Truffaut films as *Stolen Kisses, Bed and Board,* or *The Wild Child.* Nor is it unnatural or illegitimate that its interest should in large part derive from the fact of its being a reworking of the materials of Truffaut's most adored film, *Jules and Jim,* no matter what pains some critics have taken to deny the two films' similarities.

Henri-Pierre Roché published *Jules and Jim,* his first novel, late in his life, and shortly after followed it with the publication of his only other work, *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent,* a more autobiographical account of the events on which the earlier book had been based. I haven't read the Roché books, which I understand the Truffaut films follow closely, but the justification one certainly wouldn't hesitate to grant an author's reworking of his materials from a different perspective seems to me equally to extend to the films Truffaut has made of them. The validity of the reworking, its being not merely a case of repetition, is most immediately to be seen in the fact that, though *Jules and Jim* is about a triangle of two men and a woman, and *Two English Girls* about an affair among two women and a man, the distribution of thematic roles among the characters in the two works hasn't simply undergone a change in sex but one of number. It is Catherine, in *Jules and Jim,* and it is the two sisters, in *Two English Girls,* who compel the men in each case to submit to their vision of the world, and who leave them bewildered, exhausted, and destroyed.

Catherine in *Jules and Jim* is literally a destroyer—of Jim and of herself—but she is seen sympathetically, as much victim as victimizer. Victim of her sex and of her time, of her assigned social and sexual roles, she resists those roles with a fanatical will to selfhood so insistent and protean as to resemble at times an assertion of the pure principle of free will in an inhospitably deterministic universe. And what the universe denies to her, the film grants: in the end, she stubbornly retains her capricious mystery. Yet to the extent that the imaginative effort of the film is aimed at an understanding of Catherine, at an understanding of the experience of her, she bursts the work's bonds, and eludes it. In a sense, *Two English Girls* is a second attempt to apprehend her (and if the women in *Two English Girls* sometimes suggest Catherine split in two, there is an echo of the friendship between Jules and Jim in the warmth that develops between the man in the triangle and another lover of one of the women). "You said to me: I love you. I said to you: wait. I was going to say: take me. You said to me: go away," are the opening lines of *Jules and Jim,* and they could just as well serve to begin *Two English Girls'* story of missed connections. But after the credits are seen over shots of copies of Roché's second book annotated in Truffaut's hand, the actual opening lines of *Two English Girls* (quoted from mem-

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ory) are: "Last night, I relived our story in detail. Maybe one day I'll write a book about it. Perhaps an account of our troubles might be of help to others."

In *Jules and Jim* and *Two English Girls*, it is the women who are the taskmasters and ideologizers—of love, and life—and the men who would be content to spend their lives in simple adoration of them. The two English sisters in the latter film call the Frenchman with whom for years they are emotionally entangled *"le continent"*; he is the abstraction against which they play out their individually determined roles—of bohemian emancipation on the one hand, and puritanical idealism on the other. One sees this more clearly in *Two English Girls* than in *Jules and Jim*, but this clarity is not achieved without cost. The luxuriant foliage of the earlier work has been pruned away, and, if *Jules and Jim* is like some lushly flowering garden, *Two English Girls* is like a dried, pressed carnation.

What troubles me most about the film is the question of how much this defoliation was intentional, or necessary. The heady exuberance of *Jules and Jim* has given way to a spare, stately gravity: a shot of the Frenchmen, the two sisters, and their mother ascending some stairs with a kerosene lamp at one point has all the measured grace of divers seen walking under water; though, at other times, it's difficult to estimate how much of the film's mood owes to the quintessentially poignant score by Georges Delerue (of *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Jules and Jim*), which could probably lend the same air of profound melancholy to *What's Up, Doc*? But the characters do seem almost deliberately kept from springing fully to life: mercurial Catherine is more than we can take in, the sisters are less. In a way, this is almost interesting: the fact of the women being largely blanks to some extent works; they can seem sphinxlike, and Stacey Tendeter in particular, tensely coiled behind her dark glasses, does occasionally suggest repressed depths. But as the man in their life, Jean-Pierre Léaud is not a blank, but a cipher; and though even this might work as a conception (since he is, after all, their abstraction), given the actor's cute mugging and little-boy-lost kittenishness, it does not.

And as with the characters, so with the film's muted style. This *might* be the style suited to the later film, with its shift in mood from one of lyrical celebration to quiet sadness, and with its older director's slight shift in sympathy to the beleaguered male of the triangle. But just as it seems legitimate for Truffaut to rework these materials, so, too, does one legitimately remain conscious of the fact of the return to these materials occurring at a time when the director's career is badly sagging. Is it a new "maturity" one sees in the film's measured gravity, or is it a dampening caution, a reluctance to move audaciously and risk taking the false step? The result is the same in either case: affecting as it is, *Two English Girls* seems pinched, and curiously unresonant. In a way, the most interesting thing about it is that it can be as good as it is, and still so little reawaken hopes for the resurgence of its director.

Robert Altman could have used some of Truffaut's excessive discretion. What would you call it, if you made it—that work that every film-infatuated director has buried deep within him, and usually learns to his credit to suppress? You'd probably call it *Images*, a film with a title that sounds like the title of a highbrow film quarterly. (And if you were Robert Altman, whose work, as I've argued, seems occasionally not quite in control of its own deeper levels, you might compound your folly by immersing yourself totally in the tortured psyche of your principal character; though it would compound the folly for anyone to cap a scene of particularly silly Grand Guignol by having one character ask another, "Did you remember to bring the ketchup?") The result is a determined antidote to what, in current cant, is usually referred to as a movie-movie: the definitive film-film. What it is actually is a smart photo spread of Susannah York posed in the foreground against beautiful Ireland's hills and houses: a magazine layout in search of a movie.

The Getaway is a Sam Peckinpah movie that Judith Crist and Rex Reed can love, which may not in itself be reason not to love it, but is an indication of why it's not to be loved. I suppose by now I should have got used to the idea that sooner or later almost every director I admire will make a film in which virtually no trace of what I admire is present, except in the form of impersonal skill, or surface mannerisms, or, worse, cheap exploitation and self-parody; there is really no analogy to this in the writing of fiction, hinging, as the phenomenon probably does, on the financial exigencies of the movie industry, and the director's need to succeed and keep working. (*Junior Bonner*, Peckinpah's previous film, was a commercial failure.) In interviews, Peckinpah has swaggeringly declared that on every film of his, except for *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and possibly *Junior Bonner*, his role with respect to the project assigned him and the moneyed interests in control has been that of a whore. But though I don't believe this, or a lot else Peckinpah says in interviews, in which the director can often sound like that *macho* boor his hostile critics profess to find in the personality of his films themselves, the only discernible personal investment by Peckinpah in *The Getaway* does seem to be its elaboration of his utterly puerile views on women expressed in a recent interview in *Playboy*. Thus far, with the exception of the mother in *Junior Bonner*, Peckinpah's films have lacked for rounded characterizations of women; the wife in *Straw Dogs* is persuasively drawn, but rather an extreme case. But if *The Getaway* is meant to redress this imbalance, to depict Peckinpah's idea of a real woman, helping her man, the conception is at every point betrayed by the casting: Ali MacGraw is simply, and inalterably, inert matter. McQueen and MacGraw, the ads proclaim, as though this were the ultimate in star chemistry. But though McQueen, left stranded, works hard,

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what was needed was not chemistry but alchemy.

Not that *The Getaway* is without things to admire: there is a wonderfully compressed sequence under the credits which in a few minutes distills the deepening claustrophobia of prison life, and another in which Steve McQueen tracks a petty con man who has unknowingly made off with a valise filled with money from a bank robbery. And the action sequences are directed with a cold brilliance, though it is somewhat dismaying to see the violence in a Peckinpah film relieved of its power to disturb, and used to no other purpose than melodramatic excitement, as in *Dirty Harry* (with, naturally, the film then lauded by just those reviewers who raised the most sanctimonious outcry against the violence of Peckinpah's previous work). What is worse, however, are the scenes with Sally Struthers and Al Lettieri, in which the audience, encouraged to laugh at the humiliation of an unnecessarily clownish betrayed husband, is for the first time in a Peckinpah film invited unambiguously to take pleasure in sadism. Well, *Junior Bonner* flopped, and *The Getaway* is a big hit. I only hope Peckinpah is fully conscious in this instance of just how much of a whore he has been.

OUTSIDE of Peckinpah's films, in which, at least before *The Getaway*, the violence has always been used with a serious intention to disturb, the movie which seemed to me the most disturbingly violent of those of the past few years was an icily skillful British film, *Get Carter*. A gangster film, with Michael Caine as a vicious thug avenging the death of his brother by a series of murders as he works his way toward the man he's after, what made it so disturbing was not the violence itself, ugly as that was, but the utter affectlessness with which it was presented; it was perhaps the most affectlessly violent film since *Kiss Me Deadly*, but without an equivalent of the allegorical framework by which the violence in *Kiss Me Deadly* is given meaning. No sympathy is asked for the avenger or his victims, nor are we allowed to take any vicarious pleasure in his successful completion of his task; minutes after he completes it, he, too, is killed, by a disinterested hireling. Nor is there even a suggestion that this final twist is intended as a slap in the audience's face, in the way that such thwarting of an audience's expectations in Hitchcock's films is, as a deliberate assault on the spectators' sensibilities, at least an acknowledgment of them.

The writer and director of *Get Carter*, Mike Hodges, has now made another film with Michael Caine, and, if, short of the work of the best directors, there has been a more impressively versatile one-two punch in films, I can't recall it. *Pulp*, too, is a thriller, but a thriller in a very special vein: something like *Beat the Devil*, if not as good, and something like *Gumshoe*, but better. (Indeed, unless I'm mistaken, it even features in a small role, the only other in which I've seen him, the actor who played the Arab chieftain in *Beat the Devil*, who when told that Humphrey Bogart, Robert Morley, and company have landed clandestinely on his country's shores to sell vacuum cleaners, utters the memorable line: "Ah, hut to hut, I suppose." In *Pulp*, as the head of a typing pool who has been stimulated by a pornographic novel his staff is preparing, he speaks, to the book's author, a few other memorable lines: "You have my card. Don't hesitate to touch me.")

Mickey King, the film's narrator-protagonist, played by a poker-faced Michael Caine in a performance scarcely less good than that of Albert Finney in *Gumshoe*, is the author of that novel, a successful writer of pulp fiction (*The Organ Grinder*, *My Gun Is Long*, etc.) under such pseudonyms as Guy Strange, Les Behan, Paul R. Cumming, and as the promising new literary discoveries from Egypt and Algeria, O. R. Gann and S. Odomy. Summoned to ghost-write the memoirs of an ex-star of Hollywood gangster movies now living in retirement in the same Mediterranean country as the writer, he suddenly finds his employer assassinated, and himself the target of assassin's bullets as the presumed recipient of the star's secrets of a covered-up scandal. Though in fact the deceased star hadn't confided in his biographer, the latter now launches an investigation into the matter on his own to discover the identity of his intended killer before it's too late; but he uncovers the facts of the case only to find himself at the end, immobilized by a leg wound, the unwilling house guest, presumably for his lifetime, of the guilty party, the country's "New Front" political leader, at whose estate the writer spends his days composing and reciting a pulp fantasy of revenge on his "host" to which nobody listens.

All this is recounted in a style half pulp itself, and half witty parody of it. "The old man's headed for the big sleep," the movie star's bodyguard tells the ghost writer, as though the former had read too many detective novels; "then I knew he'd get his picture in the paper," the writer remarks of a character he has just found murdered, and later he describes the series of events in which he finds himself embroiled as being "like a pornographic photograph: difficult to figure out who was doing what, and to whom." At the movie star's Art Deco villa, a wizened old woman in black dress and shawl sits and stares into the swimming pool ("Has mama eaten this week?" her son inquires); and when the star is killed (by a man disguised as a priest, which occasions a police line-up of priests), and his sculpted sarcophagus installed in a mausoleum with stained-glass windows depicting him in his most famous film roles, there is a juke box featuring excerpts from his films' soundtracks outside, and the mother is forever provided with coins with which to play it. A clue from a clairvoyant ("He was wearing a dirty mackintosh. Clairvoyants usually do.") leads to an Antonioni-esque ghost town of the old and maimed, and eventually to a second narrow escape from assassination ("Remember that thou art pulp, and unto pulp thou shalt return," the writer eulogizes over the mangled corpse of his hired would-be killer). But his escape from being silenced is short-lived. As we last see him, his leg in a cast, read-

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ing aloud while his captor shoots boar in a pit ("Where *do* you get your ideas from, Mickey?" his one remaining listener asks as she leaves him), he is wishfully exclaiming, "I'll get the bastards yet!" and then, with more conviction, "Ooh, I wish my leg didn't itch."

THIS column hasn't gone in much for consumer guidance; here is some: see *Pulp*. You may have a hard time doing this, since the film, after opening in San Francisco, unreviewed, on the bottom half of a double bill with a Charles Bronson movie (this despite a cast including, along with Caine, Lizabeth Scott, Lionel Stander, and Mickey Rooney, in a flamboyantly amusing performance) is thus far having its only New York performance as part of a limited engagement of a series of movies (works by Arrabal, etc.) reputed to be without commercial possibilities. That the, I think, very real commercial possibilities of *Pulp* can't be seen constitutes probably the biggest gaffe in film distribution since the mishandling of the Marlon Brando-Gillo Pontecorvo film, *Burn!*; the idea that film distributors have a grasp of at least the commercial side of movies is one of the great undying myths, like that of *Time* magazine's at least getting its facts straight. But then, when you withhold a "risky" movie from distribution, or simply dump it unadvertised into release, you are, of course, always right, since you're dealing in self-fulfilling prophecy.

Try to see *Pulp* without my having to tell you that it's great or a masterpiece when it isn't, or even that it's unfailingly good. (Most of the less good jokes are clustered near the beginning.) But though it would be well worth seeing merely because of its being a hugely funny entertainment, it isn't simply that either. I don't know anything about Mike Hodges, its writer-director; to judge from the hard clarity of his style, my guess is that he's had considerable experience in film-making before, perhaps for television, although *Get Carter* is his first credited feature. Impressive, however, as is the diversity between that film and this, no less impressive is how much similarity that diversity masks. In a curious way, though I probably wouldn't have said this about either without having seen both, the two films now strike me as peculiarly if unspecifically political in character, involving, as they do, corruption in high places, and the sexual exploitation, in both, of a lower-class girl by those in power. And both films portray the insurmountable frustration of trying to call the powerful to account. Don't get me wrong; *Get Carter* resolutely eschews "significance," and, like the rest of the film, the ending of *Pulp* is lightly done and very funny. And yet somehow the two films, taken together, seem to me to take on an added resonance, and finally to issue in a single, distinctive cry of impotent rage.

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Where We Are Going

THE SEVENTIES: PROBLEMS AND PROPOSALS. Edited by IRVING HOWE and MICHAEL HARRINGTON. *Harper & Row. 519 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THESE are times of considerable confusion on matters of public policy. The federal housing program has collapsed amid scandal; equal expenditure on education is called a constitutional right by some, attacked as irrelevant by others; the welfare system is as universally deplored as is the high crime rate, yet there is great discord as to how to deal with either. It is now a commonplace to state that the "Great Society" represented an attempt to solve social problems by throwing money at them, and that it largely failed.

As we move into the 70's the problems remain much as they were ten years ago, but, so, probably, do the impulses that led us to confront and try to meliorate them in the 60's. Even under President Nixon, perceived inadequacies in medical care, schooling, public safety, tax reform, and racial equality have yet to achieve widespread popularity; as poll after poll has indicated, the large majority of Americans continues to favor increased spending to alleviate these ills. The problem is to figure out what exactly to do *now,* and one therefore turns with expectancy to *The Seventies: Problems and Proposals,* an anthology from *Dissent* that presents a democratic-socialist view on matters of public policy. The democratic socialists, after all, were firm supporters of the Great Society, yet recognized its inherent limitations: liberalism and socialism, while hardly antithetical, were for them not to be confused. The structure of American society would not be changed by the programs of the 60's, the socialists knew, but they enthusiastically joined liberals in making whatever progress was possible.

Yet, though it contains several essays of value, taken as a whole *The Seventies* is a disappointment —mainly because it hardly focuses on the 70's at all, but rather on the 60's. Indeed, *The Sixties: Developments and Analyses* would have been a more accurate title for this collection, despite the final paragraphs on the future appended to several of the chapters. As an analysis of the 60's, *The Seventies* in fact has many good things to offer, especially in those essays which exemplify the peculiar combination of qualities one looks for in the best writings of the democratic socialists: an attention to social structure; a historical perspective which imparts an ability to distinguish fads and fakes from significant change; and an intellectual independence from liberal politics and programs that allows a realistic assessment of both. Nowhere are these talents more useful than in a discussion of a phenomenon like the black-power movement or youth culture, and the articles by Martin Kilson on black politics and by Jesse Pitts, Erazim Kohák, and Gus Tyler on youth, the counterculture, and the campus are probably the best in the volume. Kilson's article particularly is a model of its kind; his detailed attention to the past does not lead him to avoid dealing with the present, and his understanding of the political realities of Nixonian America is as firm as his grasp of black history and sociology. Twenty-eight essays of similar cogency would have made this book invaluable.

THE fact that *The Seventies* has little to tell us about what to do now points to the possibility that these "writers grouped around the magazine *Dissent,*" or that democratic socialists in general, are as much at a loss as their liberal friends when it comes either to the question of political strategy or to the more basic question of proposals to be adopted for legislative action. On the first point—political strategy—the contributors to this volume seem to be torn between a kind of McGovernism (as exemplified in a piece by the late Arnold Kaufman calling for "a constituency of conscience") and the old "coalition politics" associated most notably with Bayard Rustin.

On the second point, *The Seventies* offers an article by Leon Shull and Stina Santiestevan entitled, "What Do We Want Right Now: Legislative Proposals for Reform." Both the authors and the proposals come as something of a surprise. Mr. Shull is the national directior of Americans for Democratic Action, perhaps the nation's preeminent liberal group, and Miss Santiestevan is editor of *ADA World.* There is, one feels safe in saying, no body that more strongly supported the many programs of the Great Society than did ADA, and what this chapter puts forward as its contribution to the democratic socialist perspective on the 70's is nothing but a rehash of those very same programs and proposals. To give but one example: the authors call for increased funding of federal housing programs, and they further ask that (with the "probable" exception of owner-occupied multifamily units) "house ownership be limited to those who live in it or to community institutions" and that "legislation phasing ownership of rental units to tenants and the community" be introduced. A better means of throwing more money down the drain of the incredible federal housing mess, while drying up private housing construction, could not be imagined. Indeed, a better example could not be found altogether of a program whose advocates have to this day failed to study adequately the full extent of its aims and possible consequences.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS, *who is currently in his third year at the Harvard Law School, contributed "The Quota Commission" to our October 1972 issue.*

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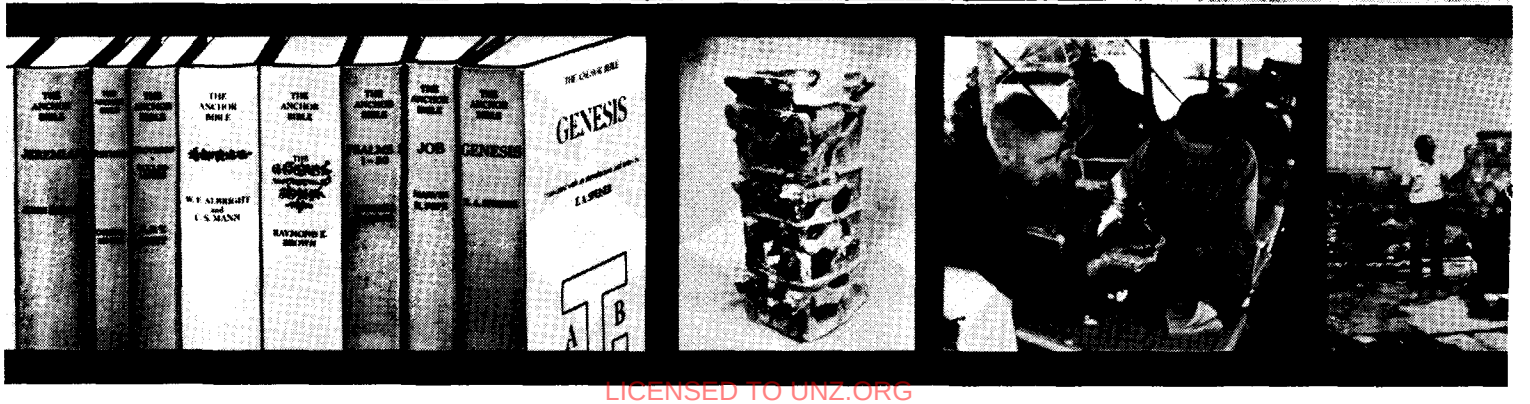

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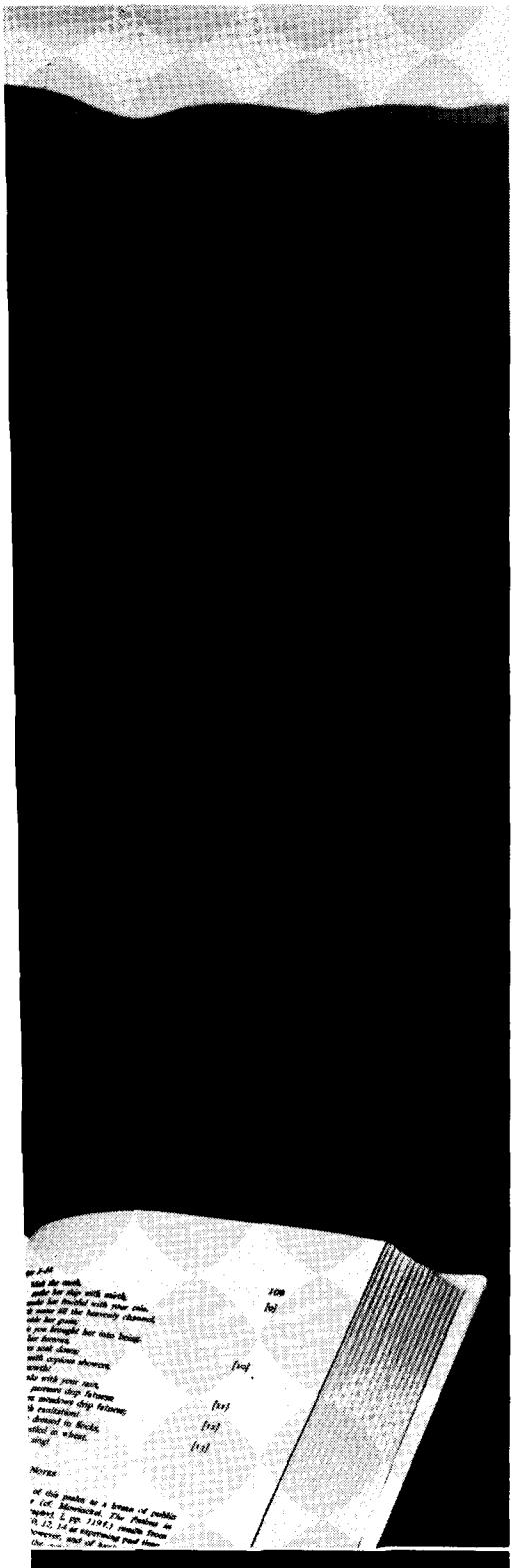

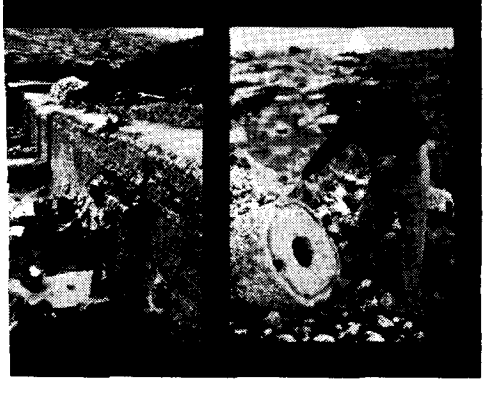

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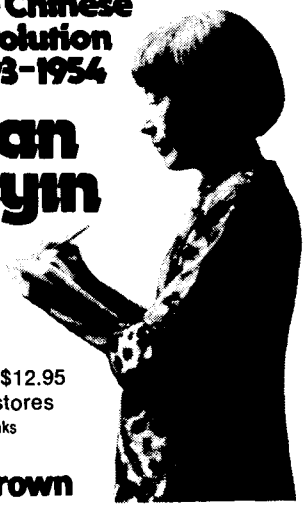

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As opposed to suggestions like these, President Nixon's proposed cutbacks in the federal housing program are on balance better news for the poor.

Other proposals made in this chapter are more sensible than the one on housing: health insurance, research and legislation on environmental policy, consumer protection, and better manpower programs are all fine ideas, although at this point in time they can scarcely be said to embody a uniquely "socialist" view. But the essence of the chapter is summed up in the epigraph the authors place before their concluding section: " 'We've tried everything else, now let's try money'—John Kenneth Galbraith." After the experience of the 60's it is nothing short of incredible that this simplistic formula should still be invoked with unblinking approval. Where is the necessary appraisal of which programs have worked and which failed? Where, amid all the talk of "priorities," is an evaluation of which programs are worthy of the political capital at one's disposal, which merely peripheral? Most of the Great-Society programs are now being scrapped and in many cases deservedly so. Where is the necessary examination of what might take their place—a guaranteed annual income, a negative-income tax, or some other, as yet unrevealed, device?

One might easily understand were socialists to give up on the social programs of the 60's and instead concentrate entirely on income redistribution through direct payments. What really cannot be understood is the continuing and more or less uncritical acceptance of the attitude that spending money will make problems go away, without an accompanying hard look at the details of the programs on which billions have been, and are to be, spent. Perhaps *The Seventies* is simply a bad selection of essays. Perhaps *Dissent* has failed to deal with such matters as well as have some other socialist publications (one thinks especially of *New America);* this is not the place to get involved in *that* debate. But it may also be that the socialist perspective is just not as helpful in policy planning as a careful analysis can be of the performance of past programs and the probable effects of newly proposed ones. *The Seventies* does little to refute such a conclusion. There may be no faulting the authors' values, or even their (general) vision of the future. But one sorely misses any careful consideration of steps we are meant to take in planning for the social programs of the 70's, of how we are meant to get where we are going from where we are now.

Philosophy of Judaism

RELIGION OF REASON OUT OF THE SOURCES OF JUDAISM. By HERMANN COHEN. Translated, with an Introduction, by SIMON KAPLAN. Introductory Essay by LEO STRAUSS. *Frederick Ungar. 489 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL A. MEYER

MODERN philosophers of Judaism have always had to face a dilemma. If they follow closely the most prominent strands of Jewish tradition, elucidating underlying concepts and revealing connections, then they act as historians of Jewish religion, but they do not create Jewish philosophy. If, on the other hand, they choose to reshape a major portion of Jewish thought and practice—that which they regard as the essence—into a systematic religious philosophy, they lay themselves open to the charge that theirs is not the true Judaism; it is the imposition of a foreign system of thought which cannot possibly encompass the rich diversity of historical Judaism. Scarcely a single creative Jewish thinker has been able to avoid this latter critique—certainly not Hermann Cohen, whose magnum opus after more than fifty years has at last been translated faithfully into English.

Cohen was born in 1842, the son

MICHAEL A. MEYER *is professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and the author of* The Origins of the Modern Jew *and the forthcoming* Ideas of Jewish History.

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of a cantor in a small town in central Germany. After a brief period of study at the rabbinical seminary in Breslau, his interests turned to philosophy, leading him to a long and successful teaching career at the University of Marburg. Within a short time, he was given the rank of full professor of philosophy, an extraordinary achievement for a Jew during the Second Reich. While at Marburg, Cohen first gained a reputation as an admiring but critical interpreter of Kant. Later he developed his own neo-Kantian system, attempting to overcome the problem of the "thing-in-itself" which, according to Kant, must forever remain unknown. In the beginning he devoted little attention to Jewish thought and affairs, though he never made any effort to hide his Jewishness. It was only as a result of the anti-Semitic agitation, which after 1879 reached into the most prestigious intellectual circles, that Cohen began to assert his identity as a Jew. It took another twenty years until he set out to deal systematically with Jewish thought, and not until the final period of his life, when after his retirement from Marburg he taught at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin, did he formulate his philosophy of Judaism comprehensively, as it appears in this volume. The book was completed shortly before his death in 1918 and published a few months later.

Students of Jewish thought disagree regarding the extent and significance of the change which Cohen's thought underwent between his Marburg and Berlin periods. It is certain, however, that during most of his career Cohen was foremost a neo-Kantian philosopher whose God was an idea necessary for understanding the relationship between physical and moral reality, the capstone of a philosophical system. Judaism was of no direct significance for his thought in those days, least of all its traditional religious categories of creation, revelation, and redemption; sin, repentance, and forgiveness. But during the last two decades of his life it is religious thought that came to the focus of his attention. While not

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dethroning philosophy, it demanded a role which was in no way subservient to it.

IN FORMULATING his philosophy of Judaism, Cohen was determined to relate his own view of Judaism to the given tradition. When his contemporary Moritz Lazarus wrote his *The Ethics of Judaism,* Cohen attacked him mercilessly for merely organizing data without providing a philosophical framework. He himself wanted to avoid that shortcoming while at the same time remaining within the bounds of historical Judaism. His solution was to present a religion of reason, i.e., one that was philosophically grounded but which drew support from selected sources of both the biblical and the rabbinic traditions. In practice this meant the explication of particular texts within the logically sequential exposition of a philosophy of Judaism.

Cohen's first concern in his final work is to secure the domain of religion and to assert its independence from ethics. He does so by differentiating the ethical "I" in which every person is an example of humanity from the religious "I," which represents the individual in his concrete particularity. Religion alone pays heed to this latter aspect of the self and—here Cohen anticipates Buber—to the relationship between the "I" and the "Thou." The role of God is also different in each instance. For ethics He is the guarantor that human moral aspiration will not be in vain; for religion He is the source of individual redemption.

The God of Jewish religion, as Cohen here understands Him, is not properly called "one," but rather "unique," and Cohen goes to great lengths to support this view of monotheism from traditional sources. Consistently deriding any form of pantheism or mysticism, he declares that God is apart from the world; nothing can be compared to Him, no descriptive attributes properly applied. He alone is being, while men and nature are mere becoming. The relation of God to the world is therefore that between what already is and what has yet to be fully realized. Cohen represents the origin and the continuous renewal of this relationship by the traditional concept of creation. But the human being is not merely a creature, he is specifically a rational one and his reason demands a special category of relation. Following medieval Jewish philosophers, and especially his favorite Maimonides, Cohen argues that God is the source of human reason and that revelation, properly understood, is God's awakening of reason in man; it serves as the basis of God's communication with him. Thus revelation, along with creation, "correlates" the unique God with His creature man. For Cohen, this link of reason represents itself in moral terms. God's holiness means that God is the archetype for human conduct. It becomes man's infinite task to emulate this holiness through continuous commitment to moral action. Serving God, therefore, means concern for one's fellowmen both in their individuality and as representatives of humanity. For Cohen, who espoused democratic socialism and pointed out its roots in the Bible, the basis of this concern is poverty and the undeserved suffering which it engenders.

Compassion for the suffering of the poor, richly illustrated by texts from the Hebrew Prophets, leads Cohen to a consideration of the special relationship of Israel to its God, and it is suffering which becomes the key term of this relation. God loves Israel as He loves the suffering poor, for Israel is destined to suffer on their account. In loving God as the moral ideal, Israel committed itself to the messianic vision of moral perfection and took upon itself the role of the "suffering servant." Thus Israel has ever been the messianic people whose imperative lies in striving toward the fulfillment of the divine ideal (represented in the final chapter by *shalom* in its double root meaning of peace and perfection). Apart from personal considerations, it was this conviction that Israel's burden was messianic suffering which forced Cohen to decry Zionism as an ideology that sought "happiness" for the Jews along with the other nations of the world. Ironically,

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such a goal to Cohen's mind had to represent the worst form of assimilation, a betrayal of Jewish messianism.

Yet as significant as the universal ideal is for Cohen, a very large portion of this book is taken up with the religious life of the individual Jew. Among the Prophets, it is Ezekiel whom Cohen singles out as introducing a new and central element into biblical Judaism: the sin of the individual for which he alone stands responsible before God. Cohen differentiates this idea sharply both from earlier Hebrew conceptions and from the Christian notion of original sin. Liberation from sin becomes possible through repentance which leads to God's redemption of the individual and his reconciliation with himself. This is Cohen's interpretation of Ezekiel's "Cast away from you your transgressions, wherein you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit" (18:31). The new "I" that is formed sets itself the task of holiness which, though infinite in its goal, is not a labor of Sisyphus. Self-sanctification is achieved even in a present moment; it is for Cohen what Judaism means by God's forgiveness of sin. The Day of Atonement serves him as the symbolic framework in which individual sin and its redemption point toward the messianic and universal redemption of mankind. Other fundamentals of Judaism are likewise made to fit the general interpretation: immortality, in his view, becomes the soul's survival within history through the merit it has gained in pursuing the moral task; Jewish law is seen as a symbolic means to redemption, Jewish prayer as the language of the correlation between God and man.

COHEN's reputation has been tarnished over the years because of his anti-Zionism and because of the similarities he noted between Judaism and Germanism. But his antagonists have not always been completely fair. Cohen's view of suffering as essential to the religious identity of the Jew is not popular in an age which has witnessed undeserved, seemingly meaningless Jewish agony and de-

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struction on such a horrendous scale. The model of the Israeli "fighter" seems to many much more attractive and even moral than the Diaspora model Cohen presents. And from the vantage point of today, Cohen's faith in Germany can easily be declared naive and misplaced. Yet it is a mistake to condemn the man's work as a whole because he—like so many others—was blind to the continuing force of anti-Semitism and to a form of Jewish realization possible only within the Jew's own land. He was certainly not, as has sometimes been charged, an assimilationist, but rather the advocate of a religious form of Judaism, stringent both in its ethical imperatives and in its call for a Jewish religious "isolation" to preserve and advance the Jewish teaching.

The historical significance of *Religion of Reason* is evident in the influence it exercised on later Jewish thinkers. Nearly all who succeeded Cohen drew upon its ideas even while they sought to go beyond it. Franz Rosenzweig, Cohen's student for a time, was deeply influenced by his mentor's concepts of creation, revelation, and redemption, though his own existentialist stance would not allow for an ever-present bridge of reason between God and man. For Martin Buber, Cohen's understanding of the religious transformation of "the next man" into the "fellowman" became basic to his own interpersonal religious philosophy, though he transformed Cohen's God from "idea" into "Eternal Thou." Leo Baeck's thought was likewise closely related to that of Cohen, though he too went beyond its rationalism—moving from Kantian imperative alone to a dual concept of mystery as well as commandment. Finally, Mordecai Kaplan has also gone to Cohen for inspiration, some years ago presenting an English epitome of Cohen's work. Kaplan's functionalism, however, if in some respects analogous, again represents a departure from Cohen, in this case not toward existentialism or a veneration of creation's mysteries, but rather in the direction of American pragmatism.

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Quite apart from its seminal impact on the course of 20th-century Jewish philosophy, *Religion of Reason* still today, and in the perspective of fifty years, remains an astonishing achievement. The basic concepts of Judaism are all present here—even those which seem furthest removed from the consciousness of secular men. And yet the power of Cohen's mind has woven them into a single philosophical web. He demands allowance for much reinterpretation of texts and religious imagination, but ultimately he asks no major sacrifice of the intellect. To be sure, Cohen fails to encompass the fullness of Jewish reality within the bounds of a single system, and he fastens upon those elements and interpretations which he finds most congenial to his own cast of thought. But in the end, it remains remarkable how much of Judaism he is able to contain within the limits of philosophy.

Life of a President

HARRY TRUMAN. By MARGARET TRUMAN. *Morrow. 602 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by LOUIS BERG

PRAISE of famous men should not be assigned to their devoted children—the subject is too close to the camera for true definition. Margaret Truman's memoir of her father is naturally a bit slanted: an only child, she was so overwhelmed by the concentration of parental love as to be blind to even such minor faults as her father, a candid man, cheerfully acknowledged. Someone, an admirer, once said that Harry Truman was right about large things, wrong about small ones, but his doting daughter wants it all the way, whether she is discussing Hiroshima or the *Missouri Waltz.* Thus, there is general agreement that Truman retained his independence and his essential honesty even when, early in his career, he was involved with the Pendergast machine, but Miss Truman must have it that there was no involvement at all. The truth of course is that Truman solicited Pendergast's aid, and could not have been elected to the Senate without it. On a lesser plane, she insists that a concert pianist was lost to the world when her father took up politics; Truman himself, though he fiercely defended his daughter's musical talents, was diffident about his own: "I quit taking piano lessons at the age of fourteen," he told Edward R. Murrow, "because I thought it was sissy."

It would be foolish then to expect revelation from so devoted a daughter, and a confirmed Democrat at that, and it is not because of its excess of zeal that one may fault Miss Truman's generally lively book; she is telling an all-too-familiar story, one that has already been fully charted by others, notably by Alfred Steinberg in *The Man from Missouri.* The trouble is not with Margaret but with Harry. More than any world leader before him he practiced open diplomacy. Truman drew no classified curtain around the acts and plans of his administration; he announced his intentions, and then followed them to the letter. He was naively shocked when Stalin—"reminds me of old Pendergast," he once remarked—broke his word. Indeed, the most ardent revisionists would be hard put to uncover secret documents of his contemporaries, although many have tried, most recently Bert Cochran in *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency.** Though he puts forward no new evidence—in fact he uses the same source material as Miss Truman—Cochran reaches exactly the opposite conclusions. Administering an overdose of antidote, he is as venomously critical of Truman as she is loving and lavish; not only does Cochran attack the notion that Truman was a great President, he will not even allow that he was a good one, or a fair one, or indeed any kind of President at all.

TRUMAN'S private life, like his public one, was an open book, immune to backstairs gossip or the disclosures of disgruntled associates. He could thus afford to be candid. Few politicians have been so concerned

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LOUIS BERG, *a writer and critic, is a veteran contributor to these pages.*

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with the public welfare and so indifferent to their own. When he left the Senate he was too poor to meet the mortgage on his mother's farm. There were scandals in his administration but none that touched him personally. He was a model husband and father, touchingly loyal to friends—his wartime "buddies" in particular—even to those who did not deserve his loyalty. Yet despite his rather straitlaced rectitude and Puritanical morals, he had a tart and even a wicked tongue; his salty asides made for "copy" as surely as his set speeches or official pronouncements, and this made him the darling of the newspapermen who covered him in the White House, accompanied him on his tireless political campaigning, and pursued him from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to his retirement home on Euclid Avenue in Independence, Missouri.

Truman's very ordinariness, his lack of side, his unabashed wearing, even when he was President of the United States, of the crazy shirts of the archetypical American tourist, his preference for such Middle-American indulgences as hoisting a few with friends or drawing to an inside straight, established his reputation as a colorful "character." These qualities stood out all the more when set against the somber background of world crisis throughout his Presidency and the awfulness of the decisions he had to make. He was not, however, a man given to agonizing over his decisions, or soul-searching of any kind. In his own words, when he made a decision, he lost no sleep over it, and went on briskly to the next one. Not that he was callous. His decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was based on humanitarian considerations; the estimate given Truman was that the alternative of an invasion of Japan would cost more than a million casualties, Japanese as well as American. He had weighed the other choice—that of dropping a demonstration bomb—but had to abandon it because the military possessed only two of the frightening weapons at that time. And in point of fact, the second bomb had to be dropped before Japan was brought to its knees. This explana-

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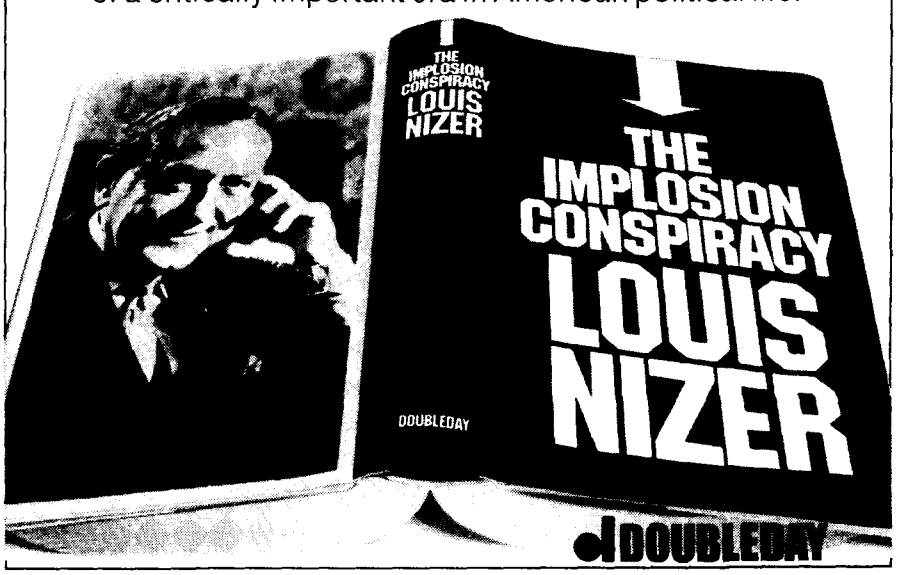

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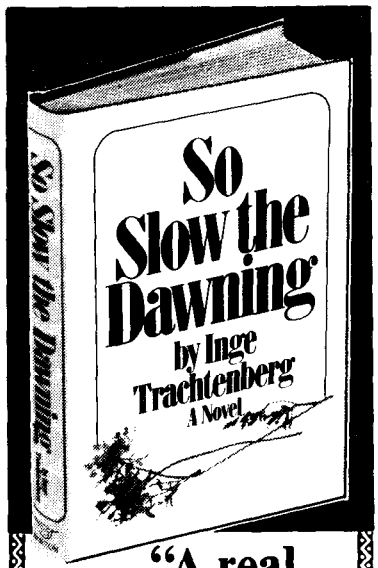

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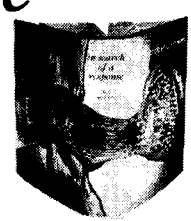

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tion, whether one approves of it or not, will have to stand, for Truman was no Dr. Strangelove, no dreamer of world conquest.

In domestic politics, Truman, the son of an unreconstructed Southern mother, whose influence on him was great, could yet fight for full civil rights for blacks and for integration. He anticipated and thought beyond present-day welfare programs—medicare, social security, full employment and equal opportunity. Born to isolationism, he could pursue such far-reaching visions as Point Four, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the United Nations. President Roosevelt was a hero in the Jewish community, but Truman was a better friend to the Jews. On purely emotional grounds, he pressed for the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine, and recognized the Jewish State of Israel almost immediately after its independence, overriding his own State Department.

BUT all this has been said in his lifetime, all that he did was known, and the best source material for history or biography came from Truman himself, for he often spoke, sometimes too freely, about himself and others; his run-ins with Henry Wallace, with James Byrnes, with Roosevelt and Eisenhower, are common knowledge. The obituaries that flooded the columns of newspapers and magazines after his death were of a sameness, and will remain, I think, the judgment of posterity.

What has his daughter to add? For all her assiduous research and digging into his files, no more than gleanings, a few choice tidbits that may have eluded other researchers, or were based on her own intimacy with the subject at home, some personal letters. But at least one of her anecdotes is new and bears retelling. It illustrates the rather bristly relationship between Truman and General Eisenhower (she denies that her father ever entertained the notion of having Eisenhower succeed him on the Democratic ticket). The General had made a left-handed apology for not attending the 1948 Truman inauguration; he had not wanted, he said, to attract attention away from the President. " 'You were not here because I did not send for you,' Truman said sharply. 'If I had sent for you, you would have come.' "

So far as I know, no one, including Miss Truman, has pointed out the close parallel between Truman's career and that of Lyndon Johnson. Each man ascended to the White House through the Senate and Vice Presidency; each was at first adjudged unfit for the high position and then measured up to it; each was of Southern birth and antecedents and yet made notable contributions to the cause of civil rights; each inherited a war he did not initiate and each incurred the wrath of liberals in the course of fighting that war—for a single wartime act, Hiroshima, in the one instance; for the escalation of the war in Vietnam in the other—and thus each man's remarkably good record in the White House came under a shadow. But the American public was kinder to Truman than it was to Johnson. Johnson retired morosely to his ranch in Texas, and was rarely asked for his opinions, and rarely offered them, while Truman continued to be consulted on his retirement, an elder statesman and homespun sage, dogged by reporters, politicians, and celebrity-seekers to the end of his days.

Policymaker

PEACE IN THE BALANCE: THE FUTURE OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. By EUGENE V. ROSTOW. *Simon & Schuster. 342 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by ADAM B. ULAM

IN 1966, when many of the original New Frontiersmen sought what then seemed the safe refuge of the academy, Eugene Rostow traveled in the opposite direction, going from the Yale Law School to the State Department. There, for the balance of President Lyndon Johnson's term, he occupied the number three position. Now back at Yale, Mr. Rostow has delivered himself of the mandatory book that all former public servants seem impelled to write.

ADAM B. ULAM *contributed "The Cold War According to Kennan" to our January issue. Mr. Ulam is professor of government at Harvard.*

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The majority of such books, especially those produced by Mr. Rostow's ex-colleagues in policy-making, are distinctly apologetic in tone, being nothing more than variations on a theme: "It wasn't *I* who did it," or "I wasn't there when it all began." Mr. Rostow, to his credit, has chosen a different course, offering instead of the usual personal defense some general reflections on American foreign policy. He starts from the premise that before moving on to meaningful discussion in this area we must first rid ourselves of certain mistaken conceptions about what U.S. foreign policy should be, and to this end a large portion of his book is devoted to a refutation of some of the more fashionable recent critiques of America's role in the world.

For the most part Mr. Rostow displays remarkable charity toward those he criticizes, a virtue markedly absent among the opposition. On at least two occasions, however, when dealing with the views of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and those of John Kenneth Galbraith—themselves not too long removed from the Washington scene—Mr. Rostow drops his forbearance. Evidently, he feels that people who have occupied glass houses should not throw stones the minute they move out. By the same token, there is a note of acerbity toward Hans J. Morgenthau, whom Mr. Rostow takes to task for presuming to tell practitioners that they have been unrealistic in their assumptions and policies, while himself remaining within the ivory tower.

One must perforce sympathize with Mr. Rostow and his fellow policymakers who spent the last half of the 60's besieged by critics of American foreign policy and amid a rising popular clamor that something be done to get the U.S. out of its predicament in Southeast Asia. One must also allow a considerable weight to Mr. Rostow's plea that the predicament was one not entirely (or even mostly) of America's making, and that the U.S. did not get involved in Vietnam because America is an imperialist nation or because its rulers took delight in bombing Asians. Indeed, it is saddening and a little foolish that such views have

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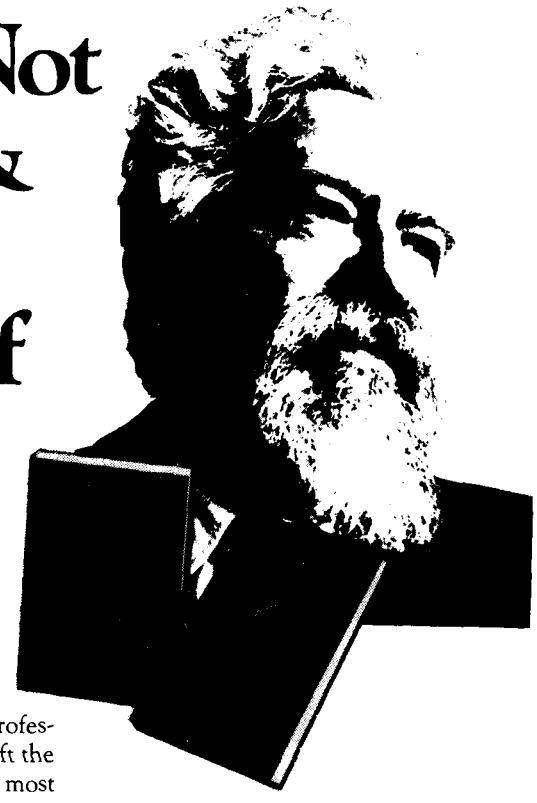

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come seriously to be entertained and debated, and one can only echo Mr. Rostow's dismay over the prevalence of an attitude which sees all the political evils and dangers in the world today as stemming from the nature of American society and from the objectives of U.S. foreign policy. Few of those who hold such a position are willing to concede what is an undeniable fact: that for all of America's errors of omission and commision over the last quarter of a century, both the U.S. and the world have been saved time and again from disaster by the hard work and restraint of many of the men who have presided over our policies (and also, one hastens to add, by luck).

But to acquit policymakers of slanderous or unfair charges is not to absolve them of the charge of having committed serious errors of judgment. Mr. Rostow admits that such errors have indeed occurred, but on the other hand—and this is a serious weakness in his approach—he is too ready to assume that the generally well-intended objectives of American foreign policy both excuse and explain the mistakes. Thus he is able to write:

> There is no magic formula, no hiding place, no easy option. The American government under five Presidents has made mistakes since World War II, including several major mistakes. But it has been on the right track. In my view it has had no real alternative to the general course it has pursued. . . . I cannot discover a new theory for our foreign policy that could assure us security without tears.

It may very well be that we are, as Mr. Rostow says, "on the right track," and yet it is possible for the train of state to have been derailed because those at the throttle did not know when to accelerate and when to brake. Again, Mr. Rostow writes:

> In the end I conclude that the mistakes that were made during the Johnson administration were mistakes of judgment, or the consequences of the increasing tension between policy and public opinion, not the product of inadequate or excessively narrow procedure for making decisions, or of an administration staffed only by the victims of bad education in world politics.

This is not a very *comforting* statement, even if we agree, as I do, that by and large the leaders in question were men of good will and free from the "arrogance of power." It is wholly legitimate to expect "mistakes in judgment" to be submitted to serious analysis, yet none is forthcoming. As for the "increasing tension between policy and public opinion," Mr. Rostow fails to appreciate that such strain always develops when the people are not kept informed as to why certain policies have been adopted and how certain mistakes have occurred. It does not do to ascribe political blunders, as he on occasion does, to the tragic condition of man in the 20th century; and it is irritating to be told that the main dilemma of our foreign policy is one of reconciling "the Jungian conflict between our unconscious and the facts of life."

Mr. Rostow is on more solid ground when he offers a glimpse—regretably, *only* a glimpse—of how things actually looked from behind the desk of an Undersecretary of State. Thus we are told that it was not until the spring of 1967 that "the United States government began to treat the Middle East as a crisis situation" and that a special interdepartmental committee was set up "to propose a policy on an urgent basis and to supervise its execution." We also learn that during the anxious days of the 1967 crisis, the State Department was as much in the dark as any newspaper reader concerning Soviet moves and goals.

These are thoroughly unsensational statements of fact, but in the long run they will prove more helpful to an understanding of our foreign policy, as well as to the shaping of a future course of action, than such famous "revelations" as the Pentagon Papers, for they form the basis of a useful postmortem and debate. Should the State Department have considered the Middle East a "crisis area" long before 1967? Was our analysis of Soviet policies and moves meticulous enough? How can we best prepare for future crises of this

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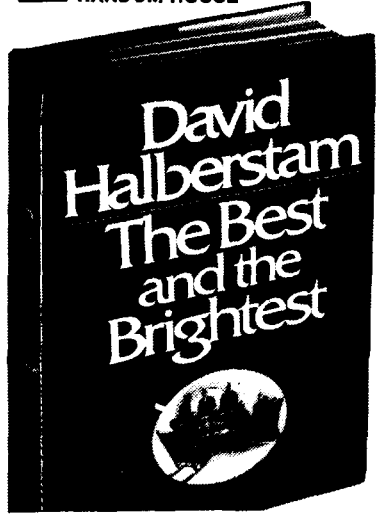

sort? Of course, one might argue that it would not have helped much even if the Middle East had been treated as a "crisis situation" long before it actually was; and it just might be that even the most enterprising intelligence service and the most knowledgeable Sovietologists can never tell us exactly what the rulers in the Kremlin are up to. Nevertheless, debate over "what really happened," over facts, in short, is infinitely more enlightening and potentially more fruitful than those endless ruminations about the wickedness of America that pass in so many circles for discussion of American policy.

As to the future, Mr. Rostow believes that "the U.S. and its allies have no real alternative but to renew their commitment to the line of policy they have followed since 1947." Somewhat beguilingly, he adds: "One can hope for better and more sophisticated handling of the political and military applications of that policy in the future." Here precisely is the rub. I think that most people, including even the more sensible of those Mr. Rostow castigates, would grant that the general line of postwar American policy has been the only one that the United States, in view of its international position and the character of American society, could pursue. But policies are not matters of commitment and exhortation alone; to a vast extent they are the sum of the particular "applications" noted by Mr. Rostow. For that reason we would do well to demand from our policymakers, past and present, that they analyze, factually and without spurious moralism, which of the "applications" have proved effective, which counterproductive, and which positively disastrous.

It is a welcome dividend when our leaders turn out to be persuasive and subtle theoreticians. But above all, they must also be skillful craftsmen, people who, to put it plainly, know how to fix things. There are some things, to be sure, that even a master craftsman cannot repair, and then he should be able to explain why. Mr. Rostow's book inspires respect for his skill as a polemicist, and gratitude for his willingness to admit errors in the execution of policies with which he was associated. One wishes, however, that he had been less sparing with the facts.

Standards & Stereotypes

BLACK EDUCATION: MYTHS AND TRAGEDIES. By THOMAS SOWELL. *David McKay. 338 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by WALTER GOODMAN

Black Education begins with a section of pertinent autobiography and ends with a discussion of such matters as IQ and race and proposals for improving the education of ghetto youths. The real theme of the book, however, is to be found in the chapters headed "Black Students in White Colleges," the toughest treatment I have come across of a subject that has always been treated most gently by educators.

Let me try to sum up Professor Sowell's charges. In the quest for black students that gained momentum in the middle 1960's, college administrators have been discriminating against capable youths and bringing onto campus "authentic" ghetto types who, often, are unprepared for the arduous side of Academe: ". . . current recruiting and admission practices overlook, by-pass, and even reject outright very capable black students in favor of less-qualified black students who fit a more fashionable stereotype." Sowell attributes this unnatural selection —"a search for misfits"—to a combination of ideology, guilt, cowardice, and laziness. When the ill-prepared men and women get into the college, their teacher has the disagreeable choice of treating them as he treats more capable students and flunking them; or giving out better marks than they have earned in order to get them through school with a minimum of unpleasantness all around—"I give them all *A*'s and *B*'s and the hell with 'em," a white professor is quoted as saying; or shunting them into Black-Studies programs and other courses where they can do well without undue strain. In

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a number of schools, the process has been politicized as enrollees with little aptitude for traditional courses ally themselves with radical or romantically inclined faculty to make ever-escalating demands on more or less craven administrators. Capable black students are drawn into this game out of loyalty or fear and white staff members succumb out of prudence or sympathy. It takes its toll in the erosion of academic standards and in the deception being played on the black youths themselves, whose eventual degree is likely to be counted at its true worth in the workaday world.

Missing from this summation is Sowell's anger—which is explained by what he tells us of his own background. He made the near incredible journey from the South to Harlem to Howard (for which he has little regard) to Harvard (where he earned an education), driven by a remarkable combination of intelligence and character. He went through phases of dropping out, but when he received *D's* and *F's* at Harvard, he did not put all the blame on the college. What had been considered a grind at Howard, he discovered, was considered goofing off at Harvard and that was an important lesson. "In view of my own gross misconceptions as a student, I have never been able to regard student beliefs as the star by which to guide academic policy." He has taught economics at several schools, including Rutgers, Howard, Cornell, and Brandeis, and now, at about age forty, is an associate professor at UCLA. Following his account of what it cost him to come to grips with the demands of an academic discipline, the reader can understand Sowell's feeling that in the treatment of black college youths today, his own hard experience is being mocked, his own accomplishment diminished. The same rigorous standards which he seems to have applied to himself, he turns now on students, administrators, and faculty, and most of them flunk.

There is nothing ingratiating about Sowell's attack. His favored method of argument is to invest his opponents with low motives and weak minds; he takes occasion to vent personal grudges and grievances; and his manner in comparing himself with lesser men is not untouched by arrogance. Moreover, the evidence he relies on for his case is largely anecdotal, some of it at second-hand—but then, hard evidence on the workings of Open Admissions programs is not so easy to come by. Still, whether or not the author wins our affection is hardly the issue here. Sowell has been around, and if he does not tell us the whole story of black education, what he does tell us deserves a better hearing than it has gotten so far. One would imagine that the fact of a black educator taking a position so unusual among black public figures would have won attention, but the book has gone almost unnoticed.

WHATEVER Sowell's tone, he shows courage in defending standards which are in need of defenders today. His account of a meeting at Cornell in 1968 conveys much of his attitude: "Their [black militant students'] schemes involved a substitution of individual 'research' in the ghettos for the 'traditional' and 'irrelevant' courses they were required to take in 'conventional' fields. I was the only black faculty member present but there was also a black woman who headed Cornell's special program there, and she was almost as skeptical as I was. The white faculty members present were, however, solidly behind the most extreme students, supporting not only their specific proposals but encouraging them in the most absurd conceptions of the intellectual process and the most paranoid view of the 'repressive' academic establishment. White full professors with jobs for life, lucrative grants and consultantships, and big homes were depicting me—an assistant professor in a cramped apartment—as a representative of the evil establishment which for some reason wanted to crush these black students."

His experience at Cornell remains raw in his memory. He was there in 1969 when some black students put on a show of guns and occupied a building; the students threatened, the faculty

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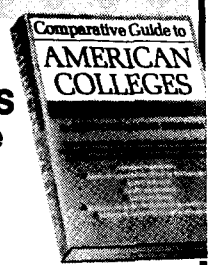

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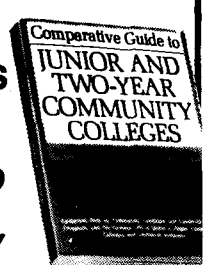

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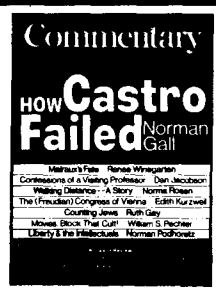

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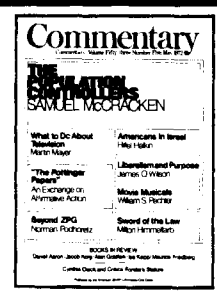

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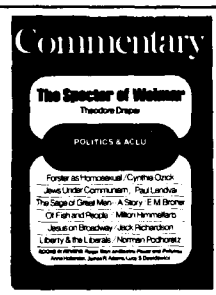

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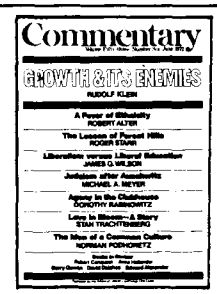

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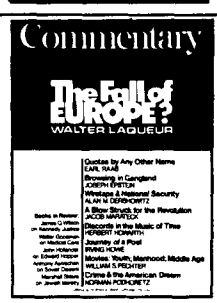

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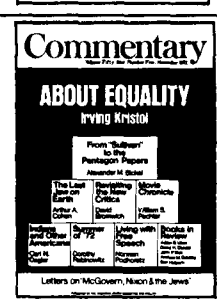

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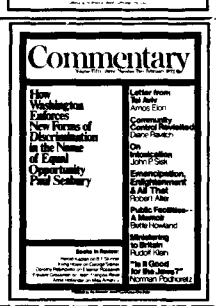

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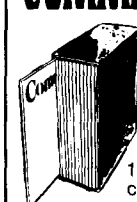

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hemmed, hawed, and capitulated, the administration "managed to be simultaneously insulting and cowardly." The most important result of the Cornell crisis, he tells us, "has been the establishment of an academically autonomous, racially separatist, Black-Studies institution on campus, specializing in ideology and sociopolitical conditioning. . . ."

As a black faculty member, still something of a rarity on many campuses in the 1960's, Sowell found himself under pressure to play the role of "guru-in-residence" to black students, or at least to go easy on those who couldn't pass his exams. He resisted. He has no use for quotas either and gives short shrift to cries for "relevance." On the whole he takes a nuts-and-bolts approach to the purpose of a college education: "If you want more people who can treat illnesses scientifically, then there will have to be more people with a certain knowledge of chemistry and biology—*regardless* of how anybody 'feels' about chemistry or biology. If you want people to build bridges and buildings, then you will have to have people who can spend years mastering abstract mathematical concepts without seeing at every step just how everything 'relates' to 'the black experience.' "

What many black leaders fear, however, is that the black youths who make it as bridge-builders and businessmen will dedicate themselves to their own careers with slight regard for the brothers and sisters left behind. That would not be without precedent, and some of the interminable slogan-mongering represents little more than an effort to remind black youths with bright futures of the many youths whose futures are bleak. But Sowell will have none of it. Before one can improve the health of ghetto dwellers, he insists, one must first learn how to be a doctor. His emphasis on practical skills will assuredly not satisfy those white critics of the society who aspire only to be the white tail on the black dog of revolution; but them we may leave to their own heaven,

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where white America is redeemed by Soul. My guess is that most black parents would not object if their children's Soul were supplemented with some know-how.

Sowell's sharp observations about ill-equipped people in college are refreshing; so far the subject has been drenched in gobs of compassion, with scarcely a tang of honesty and intelligence. He writes: "Sometimes the argument is made that an able black student 'deserves' a 'chance' at one of the 'best' colleges because it is not his 'fault' that he did not receive a good enough education to qualify under normal criteria. What would we think of an argument that an inexperienced amateur boxer with native ability 'deserves' a 'chance' to compete in the ring with one of the best professional boxers because it was not his 'fault' that he did not have the proper trainers or sufficient experience to qualify him to compete under normal standards? What would such an 'opportunity' mean, except an opportunity to absorb a savage beating with lasting aftereffects?"

For those youths who are potentially able but lack basic skills, Sowell suggests an ambitious network of pre-college training centers, from which after a year or two of concentrated remedial help, the student whom the public schools have failed—their failure, not his—will be able to enter a good college with fair prospects of success. This is a better idea, it seems to me, than counting on the colleges to do the coaching, for when we ask a first-rate college to go in for remedial training—of white athletes as well as of black athletes, of the prep-school offspring of alumni as well as public-school dropouts—we are asking it to become something less than it is, or ought to be.

The bitter reality remains: after so many years of headlined shake-ups and strenuously advertised innovations, another generation of children, now growing up, will not be prepared to fit into any college worth the name. Thomas Sowell is surely right to shout that Black Studies are a shoddy compensation for all that they are being deprived of in the ghetto.

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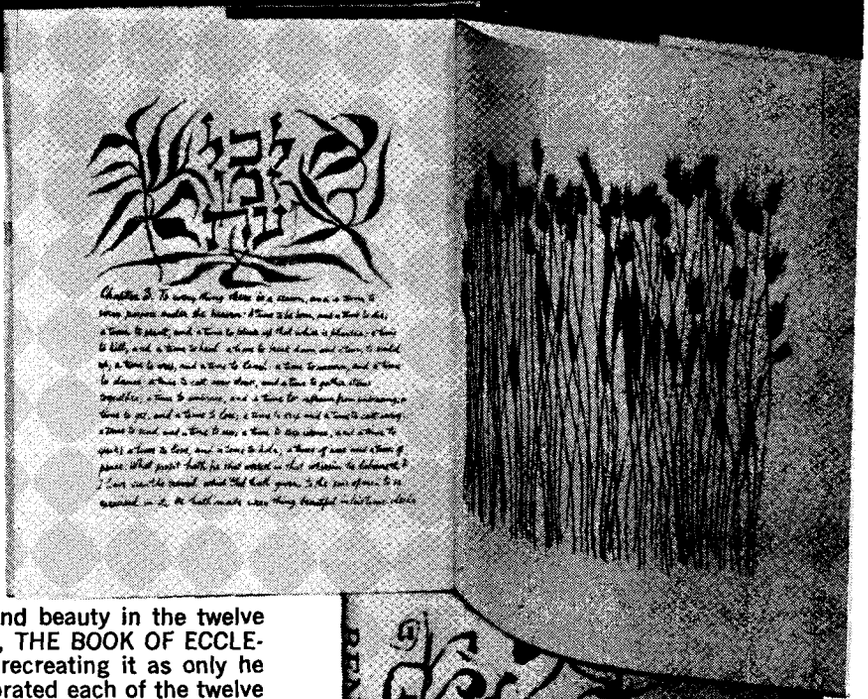

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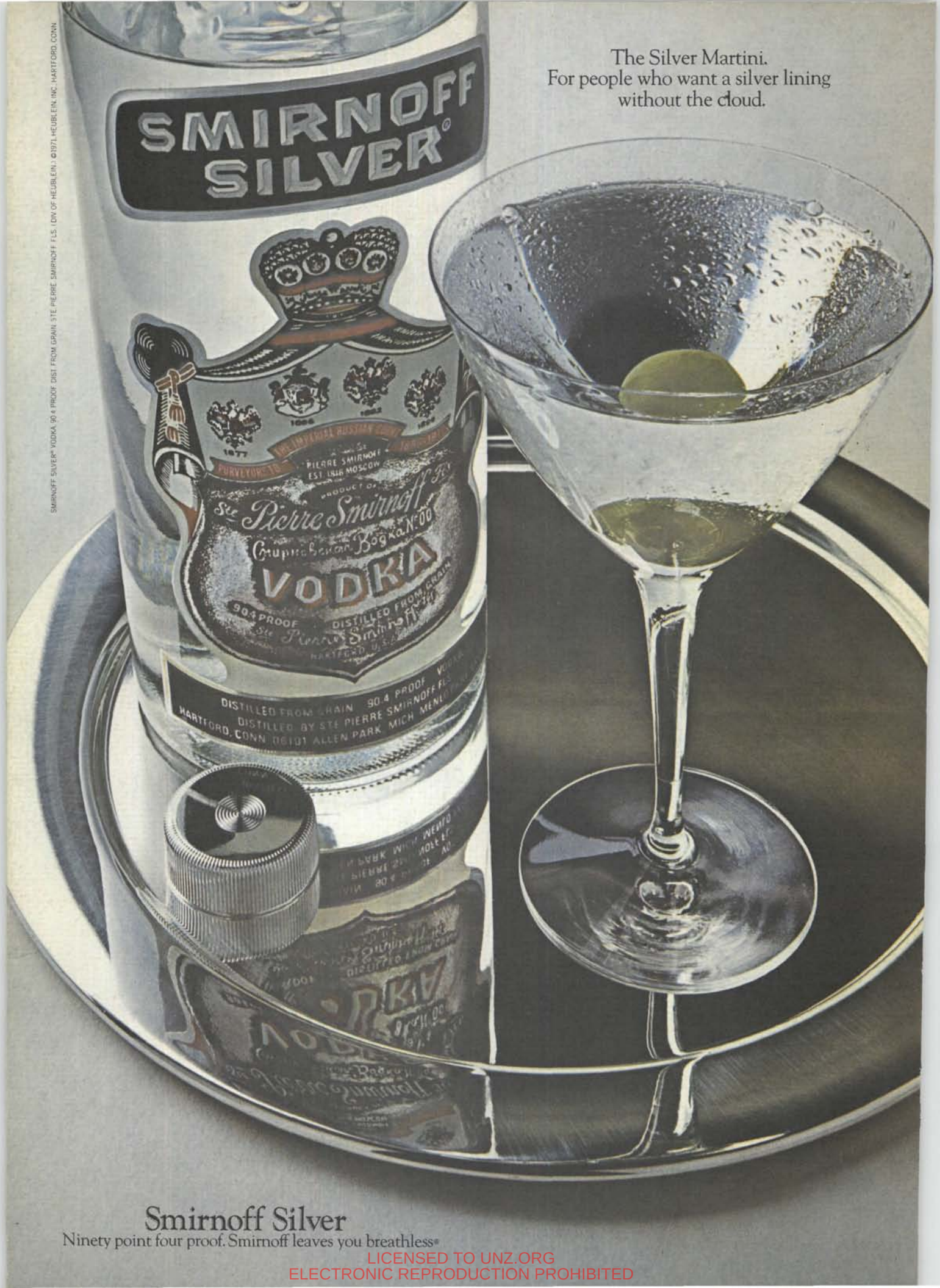

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